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Promoting and Protecting Positive Adjustment of Ethnic Minority Youth in Germany: Personal and Social Resources in the Context of Perceived Discrimination

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“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

-Nelson Mandela, 1994

Publications

The present doctoral thesis is based on the following articles:

1. Wenzing, J. M. C., Gharaei, N., Demir, Z., & Schachner, M. K. (2021). Do parental and peer support protect adjustment in the face of ethnic discrimination? A comparison between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(22), 12016. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182212016

2. Wenzing, J. M. C., Alhaddad, L., Schachner, M. K., & Hölscher, S. I. E. (2024). *"They are my safe haven": The importance of personal and social resources for refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent mastering acculturative challenges and developmental tasks.* PsyArXiv. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/rn2kd

3. Wenzing, J. M. C., Schachner, M. K., & Gharaei, N. (2023). Ethno-religious discrimination and adjustment among Muslim adolescents: The promotive and protective roles of ethnic and religious identification. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2023.2285071

4. Wenzing, J. M. C., Schachner, M. K., Karataş, S., & Juang, L. (2024). *Religious identity development and psychological adjustment among Muslim adolescents: Results from the Identity Project intervention in Germany.* PsyArXiv. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/7vjd9

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Abstract

Background: Due to the rising prevalence of xenophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, and racist views in Germany, ethnic minority youth are at great risk of experiencing ethnic and religious discrimination at school. While previous research on perceived discrimination among ethnic minority youth mainly focused on maladjustment and deficit environments, the present dissertation applies a resource-oriented perspective and pursues the overarching goal of investigating resources helping ethnic minority youth in Germany to foster their positive adjustment, specifically in the context of perceived discrimination at school. More precisely, I assumed perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school to act as risk factors and social (i.e., parental and peer support) and personal (i.e., ethnic and religious identity) resources to act as promotive and protective factors for (school-related) psychological adjustment. In this regard, I also explored similarities and differences between various groups of ethnic minority youth (i.e., refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent, Muslim ethnic minority youth) and had a closer look at different components of the religious identity formation process.

Methods: To achieve my research aims, I conducted four empirical studies, drawing on three datasets of ethnic minority youth, including quantitative, qualitative and intervention data. Data were collected from 7th and 9th graders in schools in different regions of Germany. While quantitative data were analyzed using (multigroup) structural equation modeling and latent change score modeling in M*plus*, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: The analyses confirmed the detrimental effects of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination on ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment (i.e., in the form of more depressive symptoms). Further, they revealed youth's social and personal resources as promotive factors for their (school-related) psychological adjustment (i.e., in the form of more optimism, self-esteem, self-efficacy, school-integration, and less depressive symptoms).

Parental and peer support were additionally revealed as protective factors in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination at school. Unexpectedly, ethnic and religious identity were not found to protect ethnic minority youth's (school) related psychological adjustment. On the contrary, ethnic minority youth who identified highly with their ethnic and/or religious group were found to be more vulnerable to experiences of discrimination. Lastly, the results indicate that experiences of discrimination at school can affect refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent and Muslim ethnic minority youth in different ways and that needs for support differ between these various groups of ethnic minority youth.

Conclusion: The findings underline the significance of tailored approaches for schools, fostering ethnic minority youth's personal and social resources while simultaneously preventing and tackling ethnic and religious discrimination. Implications for future research and teacher trainings are discussed.

Keywords: perceived discrimination at school, social support, identity, psychological adjustment, ethnic minority youth

German Summary

Aufgrund der Zunahme von fremdenfeindlichen, antimuslimischen, antisemitischen und rassistischen Ansichten und Einstellungen in Deutschland sind Jugendliche, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, einem erhöhten Risiko ausgesetzt, in der Schule ethnische und religiöse Diskriminierung zu erfahren (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2022; The Guardian, 2023). Während sich bisherige Forschung verstärkt auf defizitäre Umfelder und die negative Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, fokussiert hat, vertritt die vorliegende Dissertation eine ressourcenorientierte Perspektive. Sie verfolgt das Ziel, Ressourcen zu identifizieren, die die positive Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnische Minderheit angehören, in Deutschland fördern, spezifisch im Kontext von erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule. Im Konkreten verfolgt die vorliegende Dissertation vier Forschungsziele: 1) Untersuchung von ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule als mögliche Risikofaktoren für die (schulbezogene) psychologische Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, 2) Identifizierung von persönlichen und sozialen Ressourcen, die die (schulbezogene) psychologische Anpassung der Jugendlichen fördern und sie im Kontext von erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule schützen. Spezifisch sollen hierbei soziale Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers (soziale Ressourcen) und ethnische und religiöse Identität (persönliche Ressourcen) als mögliche förderliche (Schutz)Faktoren untersucht werden, 3) Untersuchung des Zusammenhangs zwischen Komponenten der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung und der (schulbezogenen) psychologischen Anpassung und Erfahrungen von ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule und 4) Exploration von Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden in Bezug auf die zuvor genannten Zusammenhänge zwischen verschiedenen Gruppen von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören

(geflüchtete Jugendliche, Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration, Jugendliche, die sich als muslimisch identifizieren).

In **Kapitel 1** werden der theoretische Rahmen (Risk and Resilience Developmental Framework, Masten, 2015; Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth's Adaptation, Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018) der vorliegenden Dissertation vorgestellt und zentrale Begrifflichkeiten (u.a. Risikofaktor, Schutzfaktor, schulbezogene psychologische Anpassung) definiert. Zudem werden zentrale Merkmale des Einwanderungslandes Deutschland herausgestellt und bisherige Forschungsergebnisse zu denen in der Arbeit untersuchten Konstrukten dargelegt. Nach Ableitung der Forschungsziele wird das konzeptionelle Modell der Dissertation präsentiert. Abschließend wird in die empirischen Studien der Dissertation eingeleitet.

Kapitel 2 bietet einen Einblick in die Zusammenhänge zwischen erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung in der Schule, sozialer Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers und positiver Anpassung (Selbstwertgefühl, Selbstwirksamkeit, Optimismus und schulische Integration) von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören. Die Stichprobe der empirischen Studie umfasste N = 104 Jugendliche, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören (M_{alter} = 17.73, SD = 3.29, 61 % weiblich). Hierbei handelte es sich um n = 55 geflüchtete Jugendliche und n = 49 Jugendliche der zweiten oder dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration. Es wurde angenommen, dass ein hohes Maß an erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung in der Schule mit einer geringeren positiven Anpassung einhergeht (d.h. in Form von einem geringeren Selbstwertgefühl, geringerer Selbstwirksamkeit, geringerem Optimismus und geringerer schulischer Integration) und dass ein hohes Maß an sozialer Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers mit einer positiveren Anpassung der Jugendlichen assoziiert ist. Zudem wurde vermutet, dass

ein hohes Maß an sozialer Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers den negativen Zusammenhang zwischen ethnischen Diskriminierungserfahrungen in der Schule und positiver Anpassung abmildern kann. Es wurde untersucht, ob es Unterschiede in den angenommenen Zusammenhängen zwischen geflüchteten Jugendlichen und Jugendlichen der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration gibt. Die Annahme eines negativen Zusammenhangs zwischen erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung in der Schule und positiver Anpassung konnte nicht bestätigt werden. Überraschenderweise zeigte sich, dass ein höheres Maß an erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung für geflüchtete Jugendliche mit einem höheren Selbstwertgefühl und höherer Selbstwirksamkeit einherging. Wie angenommen, zeigte sich sowohl für geflüchtete Jugendliche als auch für Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration ein positiver Zusammenhang zwischen sozialer Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers und positiver Anpassung. In Bezug auf die Interaktionseffekte zwischen erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung und sozialer Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers auf positive Anpassung zeigte sich, dass geflüchtete Jugendliche weniger optimistisch waren, wenn sie Diskriminierung erfuhren, aber nur, wenn sie wenig soziale Unterstützung von Peers erhielten. Für Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration wurden signifikante Interaktionseffekte zwischen erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung, sozialer Unterstützung von Eltern und Optimismus und Selbstwertgefühl gefunden. Wenn die Jugendlichen ethnische Diskriminierung in der Schule erlebten und ein hohes Maß an sozialer Unterstützung von ihren Eltern erhielten, waren sie optimistischer. Bei wenig sozialer Unterstützung von ihren Eltern zeigten sie ein niedrigeres Selbstwertgefühl.

Kapitel 3 fokussiert auf die individuellen Perspektiven von geflüchteten Jugendlichen und Jugendlichen der zweiten Zuwanderungsgeneration in Bezug auf ihre akkulturativen Herausforderungen, Entwicklungsaufgaben und Ressourcen in Deutschland. Die Daten für die

qualitative Studie wurden mithilfe von elf semi-strukturierten Interviews gewonnen. Sechs geflüchtete Jugendliche und fünf Jugendliche der zweiten Zuwanderungsgeneration nahmen an den Interviews teil (M_{alter} = 15.45, SD = 0.69, 18 % weiblich). In der Studie wurde untersucht, welche Ressourcen die Jugendlichen besitzen, um ihre akkulturativen Herausforderungen und Entwicklungsaufgaben zu bewältigen und um ihre positive Anpassung zu fördern. Zudem wurde ein besonderes Augenmerk auf das Zusammenspiel von akkulturativen Herausforderungen und Entwicklungsaufgaben gelegt und auf mögliche Unterschiede zwischen geflüchteten Jugendlichen und Jugendlichen der zweiten Zuwanderungsgeneration.
Mit Hilfe der Methode der thematischen Analyse wurden die Daten in vier Themen strukturiert: 1) Akkulturative Herauforderungen, 2) Entwicklungsaufgaben, 3) persönliche Ressourcen und 4) soziale Ressourcen. Insgesamt zeigen die Ergebnisse die hohe Relevanz von persönlichen (u.a. individuelle Merkmale, Identität, Religiosität) und sozialen Ressourcen (u.a. Unterstützung von Freunden, Familie, Lehrern) zur Bewältigung von akkulturativen Herausforderungen (u.a. Sprachbarrieren, erlebte ethnische und religiöse Diskriminierung, kulturelle Unterschiede) und normativen Entwicklungsaufgaben (u.a. Autonomieentwicklung, akademische Zukunftsplanung) auf, sowohl für geflüchtete Jugendliche als auch für Jugendliche der zweiten Zuwanderungsgeneration. Darüber hinaus weisen die Ergebnisse auf die Bedeutsamkeit von sozialen Ressourcen für die Jugendlichen zur Bewältigung von Diskriminierungserfahrungen hin.

In **Kapitel 4** wurden die Zusammenhänge zwischen erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule, ethnischer und religiöser Identität und der psychologischen (depressive Symptome, Selbstwertgefühl) und verhaltensbezogenen Anpassung (störendes Verhalten in der Schule) von Jugendlichen, die sich als muslimisch identifizieren und einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, untersucht. Die Studie erweitert die bisherige Forschung

(z.B. Benner et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2013; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor, 2016), indem sie einen Schwerpunkt auf erlebte religiöse Diskriminierung in der Schule und die religiöse Identität von muslimischen Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, legte. Die Daten, auf denen die Studie basiert, wurden im Rahmen eines achtwöchigen schulischen Interventionsprogramms (das „Identitätsprojekt"; Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017; Juang et al., 2020; 2022) zur Förderung der kulturellen Identität von Jugendlichen gewonnen. In der vorliegenden Studie wurden die Daten des Messzeitpunkts T1 verwendet. Insgesamt umfasste die Stichprobe N = 105 muslimische Jugendliche, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören (M_{alter} = 13.30, SD = 0.75, 45 % weiblich). Es wurde erwartet, dass ein hohes Maß an erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung mit einer geringeren psychologischen (d.h. in Form von mehr depressiven Symptomen und einem geringeren Selbstwertgefühl) und verhaltensbezogenen Anpassung (mehr störendes Verhalten in der Schule) der Jugendlichen einhergeht. Zudem wurde angenommen, dass Jugendliche eine höhere psychologische und verhaltensbezogene Anpassung zeigen, wenn sie sich stark mit ihrer ethnischen und/oder religiösen Gruppe identifizieren. Eine starke Identifizierung mit der eigenen ethnischen und/oder religiösen Gruppe wurde zudem als ein Schutzfaktor vermutet, der die negativen Effekte von erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule auf die psychologische und verhaltensbezogene Anpassung der Jugendlichen abmildert. Durch eine Faktorenanalyse stellte sich heraus, dass die Jugendlichen nicht zwischen ethnischen und religiösen Diskriminierungserfahrungen differenzierten. Erlebte ethnische und religiöse Diskriminierung wurden daher durch das Konstrukt der erlebten ethnisch-religiösen Diskriminierung abgebildet. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass ein höheres Maß an erlebter ethnisch-religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule mit mehr depressiven Symptomen für die Jugendlichen einherging. Wie angenommen, ergaben sich positive Zusammenhänge zwischen der ethnischen und religiösen Identität der Jugendlichen und ihrer psychologischen Anpassung.

Während ein hohes Maß an Identifizierung mit der eigenen ethnischen Gruppe mit einem hohen Selbstwertgefühl einherging, zeigten sich weniger depressive Symptome bei Jugendlichen, die sich stark mit ihrer religiösen Gruppe identifizierten. Entgegen der Erwartung berichteten Jugendliche, die sich stark mit ihrer ethnischen Gruppe identifizierten und ein hohes Maß an ethnisch-religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule erlebten, mehr depressive Symptome. Darüber hinaus ergab sich, dass bei starker Identifizierung mit der eigenen religiösen Gruppe und einem hohen Maß an erlebter ethnisch-religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule das Selbstwertgefühl der Jugendlichen negativ beeinträchtigt wurde. Hingegen wurde für Jugendliche, die sich in geringem Maß mit ihrer religiösen Gruppe identifizierten, ein positiver Effekt von erlebter ethnisch-religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule auf ihr Selbstwertgefühl entdeckt. Die Ergebnisse lassen vermuten, dass eine starke Identifizierung mit der eigenen ethnischen und/oder religiösen Gruppe die muslimischen Jugendlichen verletzlicher für Erfahrungen von Diskriminierung macht.

Kapitel 5 fokussiert auf die religiöse Identitätsentwicklung von muslimischen Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören. Ebenso wie Kapitel 4 stützt sich Kapitel 5 auf Daten, die im Rahmen des Identitätsprojekts erhoben wurden. Die Interventionsdaten wurden im Rahmen eines Wartelisten-Kontrollgruppendesigns über mehrere Messzeitpunkte erhoben (T1 – T3). Der Messzeitpunkt T1 lag hierbei vor dem Start der Intervention, der Messzeitpunkt T2 eine Woche nach Abschluss der Intervention und der Messzeitpunkt T3 acht Wochen nach Abschluss der Intervention und vor der Durchführung der Intervention in der Kontrollgruppe. Die Stichprobe umfasste $N = 128$ muslimische Jugendliche, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören ($M_{alter} = 13.43$, $SD = 0.84$, 43 % weiblich). Es wurde untersucht, wie der Prozess der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung mit der psychologischen Anpassung (Selbstwertgefühl, depressive Symptome, globale Identität) der Jugendlichen

zusammenhängt. In diesem Rahmen wurden zwei Komponenten des Prozesses der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung näher betrachtet. Spezifisch handelte es sich hierbei um die Komponenten „Exploration“ und „Resolution“. Hierbei umfasst die Komponente „Exploration“ den Prozess des Erkundens der eigenen Identität und des Erwägens von multiplen Identitätsoptionen. Die Komponente „Resolution“ umfasst das Entscheiden und Festlegen auf eine Identität und die Integration dieser Identität in das eigene Selbst (Marcia, 1980). Zudem wurde untersucht, wie erlebte ethnisch-religiöse Diskriminierung in der Schule mit der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung der Jugendlichen zusammenhängt, genauer gesagt, ob Erfahrungen von ethnisch-religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule den Prozess der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung initiieren. Basierend auf früheren Studienerkenntnissen zur ethnischen Identitätsentwicklung (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017a; 2017b) wurde die Hypothese aufgestellt, dass muslimische Jugendliche in der Interventionsgruppe im Vergleich zu muslimischen Jugendlichen in der Kontrollgruppe höhere Werte auf der Komponente „Exploration“ zum Messzeitpunkt T2 zeigen, gefolgt von höheren Werten auf der Komponente „Resolution“ und einer höheren psychologischen Anpassung (d.h. in Form von einem höheren Selbstwertgefühl, weniger depressiven Symptomen und einem höheren Maß an globaler Identität) zum Messzeitpunkt T3. Des Weiteren wurde erwartet, dass muslimische Jugendliche, die zum Messzeitpunkt T1 ein hohes Maß an ethnisch-religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule erfahren, zum Messzeitpunkt T3 höhere Werte auf der Komponente „Resolution“ zeigen und dass dieser Zusammenhang durch höhere Werte auf der Komponente „Exploration“ zum Messzeitpunkt T2 vermittelt wird. Latente Veränderungsmodelle zeigten, dass größere Veränderungen in der „Exploration“ der eigenen religiösen Identität bei den Jugendlichen höhere Werte auf der Komponente „Resolution“ vorhersagten. Zudem zeigte sich, dass höhere Werte auf der Komponente „Resolution“ ein höheres Selbstwertgefühl und ein höheres Maß an globaler Identität vorhersagten. Die Kombination aus hoher Modellkomplexität und einer kleinen

Stichprobe machte es nicht möglich zu testen, ob erlebte ethnisch-religiöse Diskriminierung in der Schule den Prozess der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung initiiert.

In **Kapitel 6** werden die Ergebnisse der vier empirischen Studien (Kapitel 2 – 5) in Zusammenhang mit den zuvor genannten vier Forschungszielen gebracht. Anschließend werden jeweils Stärken, Schwächen und Implikationen für zukünftige Forschung diskutiert. Am Ende werden praktische Implikationen für den Schulkontext und für die Ausbildung von angehenden Lehrer*innen aufgezeigt.

Das **erste Forschungsziel** bestand darin, die erlebte ethnische und religiöse Diskriminierung in der Schule als Risikofaktor für die (schulbezogene) psychologische Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, zu untersuchen. Dieses Forschungsziel wurde in Kapitel 2, 3 und 4 adressiert. Fasst man die Ergebnisse zusammen, so hat sich gezeigt, dass erlebte ethnisch-religiöse Diskriminierung in der Schule einen Risikofaktor für die psychologische Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, darstellt. Allerdings hat sich nicht gezeigt, dass Erfahrungen von ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule einen Risikofaktor für die *schulbezogene* psychologische Anpassung der Jugendlichen darstellen.

Das **zweite Forschungsziel** verfolgte das Ziel, soziale Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers (soziale Ressourcen) und ethnische und religiöse Identität (persönliche Ressourcen) als fördernde und schützende Faktoren im Kontext von erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule zu untersuchen. Alle vier empirischen Studien haben sich mit diesem Forschungsziel beschäftigt. In Bezug auf die sozialen Ressourcen der Jugendlichen wurden soziale Unterstützung von Eltern und soziale Unterstützung von Peers als förderlichere

Faktoren für die (schulbezogene) psychologische Anpassung identifiziert. Darüber hinaus ergab sich, dass soziale Unterstützung von Eltern und Peers auch Schutzfaktoren im Kontext von erlebter ethnischer Diskriminierung in der Schule darstellen. Neben sozialen Ressourcen wurden auch die förderlichen und schützenden Rollen der ethnischen und religiösen Identität (persönliche Ressourcen) untersucht. Hier ergab sich, dass sich eine hohe ethnische und religiöse Identität positiv auf die psychologische Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, auswirkt. Jedoch wurden ethnische und religiöse Identität nicht als Schutzfaktoren in Bezug auf erlebte Diskriminierung in der Schule identifiziert. Darüber hinaus wurden keine förderlichen und schützenden Effekte für die *schulbezogene* psychologische Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, festgestellt.

Den Zusammenhang zwischen Komponenten der religiösen Identitätsentwicklung und der (schulbezogenen) psychologischen Anpassung und Erfahrungen von ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule zu untersuchen, war Inhalt des **dritten Forschungsziels**. Kapitel 3 und 5 haben dieses Forschungsziel näher untersucht. Die Ergebnisse aus Kapitel 5 zeigten einen positiven Zusammenhang zwischen der Komponente „Resolution“ und der psychologischen Anpassung von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören. Allerdings konnte nicht herausgefunden werden, wie die Komponenten „Exploration“ und „Resolution“ mit Erfahrungen von erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule zusammenhängen. In Kapitel 3 berichteten Jugendliche, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, sowohl über ihre Erfahrungen mit Diskriminierung in der Schule als auch über ihre (religiöse) Identitätsentwicklung. Jedoch erwähnten sie nicht, ob und wenn ja wie die Entwicklung ihrer Identität mit ihrer psychologischen Anpassung und ihren Erfahrungen von Diskriminierung zusammenhängt.

Das **vierte Forschungsziel** bestand darin, Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in den Beziehungen zwischen erlebter ethnischer und religiöser Diskriminierung in der Schule, persönlichen und sozialen Ressourcen und (schulbezogener) psychologischer Anpassung zwischen verschiedenen Gruppen von Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören (geflüchtete Jugendliche, Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration und muslimische Jugendliche), zu untersuchen. Während sich Kapitel 2 und 3 auf Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen geflüchteten Jugendlichen und Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration fokussiert haben, konzentrierten sich Kapitel 4 und 5 auf muslimische Jugendlich. Es zeigte sich, dass sich Diskriminierungserfahrungen in der Schule unterschiedlich auf die psychologische Anpassung von geflüchteten Jugendlichen, Jugendlichen der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration und muslimischen Jugendlichen auswirken können. Während in Kapitel 2 geflüchtete Jugendliche sogar eine höhere psychologische Anpassung zeigten und sich für Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration kein signifikanter Zusammenhang ergab, zeigten muslimische Jugendliche in Kapitel 4 eine geringere psychologische Anpassung, wenn sie Diskriminierung in der Schule erlebten. Zudem weisen die Ergebnisse auf Unterschiede zwischen geflüchteten Jugendlichen und Jugendlichen der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration hinsichtlich ihrer sozialen Ressourcen hin. Während sich für geflüchtete Jugendliche sowohl die Unterstützung von Peers als auch die Unterstützung von Eltern als schützende Ressourcen zeigten, stellte für Jugendliche der zweiten und dritten Zuwanderungsgeneration nur die soziale Unterstützung von Eltern einen Schutzfaktor dar.

Die vorliegende Dissertation hat persönliche und soziale Ressourcen, die Jugendlichen, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören, dabei helfen ihre positive Anpassung im Kontext von erlebter Diskriminierung in der Schule zu fördern und zu schützen in den Fokus gerückt.

Unter der Anwendung einer ressourcenorientieren Perspektive und der Berücksichtigung von Risiko- und Schutzfaktoren auf verschiedenen Kontextebenen wurden mithilfe von vier empirischen Studien förderliche und schützende Ressourcen identifiziert.

1 Introduction

With ongoing migration worldwide, in 2020, approximately 281 million people lived in a country other than their country of birth (International Organization for Migration, 2022). One-third of the migrants worldwide live in Europe, where Germany constitutes the main destination country for migrants (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2022). The ongoing rise in migration is accompanied by the need for acculturation[1] and adjustment processes from all parties, including immigrants but also locals who have to adjust to life in societies that are becoming more and more diverse. In Germany, almost 42% of children and youth under the age of 18 migrated to Germany or were born in Germany while having at least one foreign-born parent[2] (Expert Council on Integration and Migration, 2023). During their acculturation and adjustment processes, they often face various acculturative challenges (e.g., language hassles, sociocultural challenges, and discrimination) (Titzmann et al., 2011) next to their normative developmental tasks (e.g., forming a cohesive and secure sense of identity, developing self-control and responsibility) (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

With the rising prevalence of xenophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, and racist views in Europe (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2022; The Guardian, 2023), ethnic minority youth[3] are at great risk of experiencing discrimination. Reports about an increasing number of attacks on refugee shelters and rising Xenophobia and anti-Muslim racism in Germany (Alliance Against

[1] Acculturation can be defined as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936, p.139).

[2] In this dissertation, I use the term *first-generation immigrant youth* to refer to youth who were born outside of Germany and have at least one foreign-born parent. Following the recommendation of the Federal Government Expert Commission (2021), I use the term *second-generation youth of immigrant descent* to refer to youth who were born in Germany and have at least one foreign-born parent, and the term *third-generation youth of immigrant descent* to refer to youth who were born in Germany and have at least one foreign-born grandparent.

[3] In this dissertation, I use the term *ethnic minority youth* to refer to youth who are minoritized (meaning that they generally experience a low status in society) due to their ethnicity. Unless not otherwise stated, in this dissertation ethnic minority youth encompass refugee youth, first-generation immigrant youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent.

Islamophobia & Anti-Muslim Hate, 2023) underline this risk for ethnic minority youth in Germany. In addition, reports about anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, and anti-immigrant incidents at German schools indicate that these views are already present among adolescents (Arani, 2023; Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2019; The World, 2023). Being often based on ethnic minority youth's ethnicity or religion, discrimination refers to the experience of being treated negatively or less fairly than others (Jones, 2000; Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2024). Several studies revealed the detrimental consequences of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination for the positive adjustment of ethnic minority youth (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2013). Thus, it is crucial to identify personal and social resources helping youth to foster their positive adjustment.

To date, research on perceived ethnic and religious discrimination among ethnic minority youth has mainly focused on youth's general living environment and not on the specific context of school. However, schools form one of the most important acculturative and developmental contexts for ethnic minority youth (Schachner et al., 2018). Additionally, a safe school environment with positive teacher and peer relations can substantially influence youth's positive development (Furrer et al., 2014). Further, the large number of studies that focused on ethnic minority youth's maladjustment and deficit environments makes it necessary to take a resource-oriented perspective and to focus on personal and social resources that promote and protect youth's positive adjustment in the face of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school. Considering the call for greater specificity in acculturation research (Bornstein, 2017) and the aim to develop targeted intervention strategies possible differences between various groups of ethnic minority youth should be investigated.

In this dissertation, I take a resource-oriented perspective on ethnic minority youth in Germany while pursuing four specific research aims: (1) examine perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school as risk factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related)

psychological adjustment, (2) examine ethnic and religious identity on the personal level and parental and peer support on the social level as promotive and protective factors in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school, (3) investigate the relations between components of religious identity development and ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school and lastly, (4) explore similarities and differences between various groups of ethnic minority youth regarding the studied relations.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the theoretical framework of this dissertation, describe some key characteristics of Germany as a country of immigration, and draw on previous research on my central constructs to derive a conceptual model. Chapter 2, 3, 4, and 5 constitute the empirical part of this dissertation. Each chapter presents one of my four empirical studies based on three different data sets, including quantitative, qualitative and intervention data. In the last chapter (Chapter 6), I will discuss the results of the empirical studies.

1.1 Theoretical Framework of the Dissertation

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by multifaceted changes, including changes in youth's social and psychological functioning (Brown & Klute, 2006; McElhaney et al., 2009). Developmental tasks during this period include renegotiating relationships with parents, establishing key aspects of identity and developing and applying socio-emotional skills (Simpson, 2001). While dealing with developmental tasks, ethnic minority youth also face challenges related to the process of acculturation. These acculturative challenges can be intertwined with developmental tasks (e.g., Titzmann & Lee, 2018) and can present additional stress for the youth, resulting in negative adjustment outcomes (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Goforth et al., 2015). This shows the need for revealing resources supporting the youth with their developmental tasks and acculturative challenges and enable positive adjustment outcomes (e.g., Katsiaficas et al., 2016; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017).

Taking this into consideration, for the theoretical framework of the present dissertation the concepts of risk and resilience were chosen. In this regard, Masten's risk and resilience developmental framework (Masten, 2015) and Suárez-Orozco and colleagues' integrative risk and resilience model for immigrant-origin children and youth's adaptation (IRR; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018) constitute helpful frameworks. In the following paragraphs, I will present Masten's framework and Suárez-Orozco and colleagues' model in more detail.

1.1.1 The Risk and Resilience Developmental Framework

Focusing on risk and resilience in the development of children and youth, Masten's approach offers a suitable framework to study positive adjustment and outcomes in children and youth whose lives are threatened by adversity. Masten (2015) defined resilience as "the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development" (p. 10). Within this definition, two critical conditions are encompassed: (1) exposure to significant threat or severe adversity and (2) the achievement of positive adjustment despite major assaults on the developmental context (Garmezy, 1990; Luthar, 2000). Thus, resilience can be seen as a dynamic process that involves the interplay between risk and protective factors in shaping a child's or youth's adjustment.

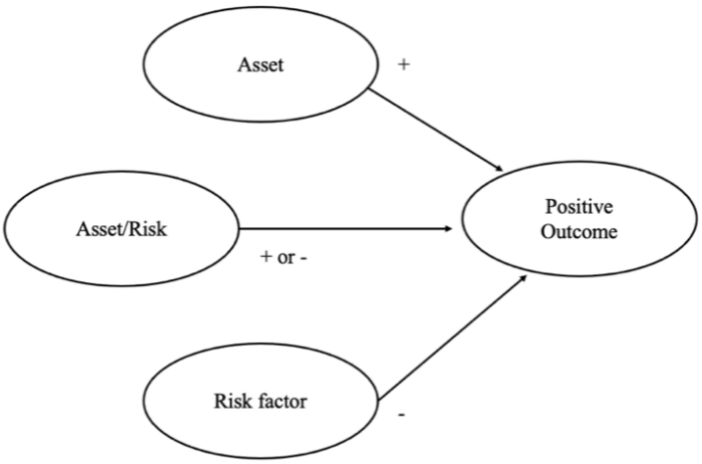
Risk factors are defined as conditions or experiences that increase the likelihood of negative outcomes. A risk factor can be specific to a particular outcome, but can also predict multiple problems of behavior, health, and growth. Masten's framework acknowledges that risk factors rarely appear in isolation in the lives of children but often occur in batches. The more risk factors a child or youth experiences, the greater the potential for negative outcomes. This phenomenon is described as cumulative risk (Masten, 2015).

Masten differs between three different models of resilience (Masten, 2015). The basic model of resilience (Figure 1) includes a combination of risks and assets that contribute directly to positive outcomes. While the risk factor could be a negative experience, the asset could be a

resource that *promotes* positive outcomes. In addition, bipolar variables can predict a particular outcome, depending on its manifestation on the continuum.

Figure 1

Basic Model of Resilience



Note. Reprinted from *Ordinary Magic – Resilience in Development* (p. 44), by A. S. Masten, 2015, Guilford Press. Copyright 2014 by the Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission.

Next to the basic model of resilience, Masten also refers to the mediator model of resilience (Figure 2) and the moderator model of resilience (Figure 3). While the mediator model assumes an indirect negative effect of a risk factor on a positive outcome through a mediator variable, the moderator model considers the possibility of *protective factors* that buffer or, in some other way, protect the child or youth from the effect of a potential risk factor (Luthar, 2000). In this model, Masten differs between risk-activated moderators and other moderators of risk that are not triggered by a threat but alter the impact of the risk by its nature (Masten, 2015).

Figure 2

Mediator Model of Resilience

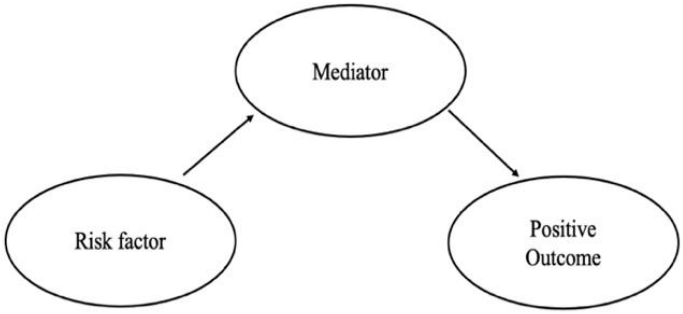


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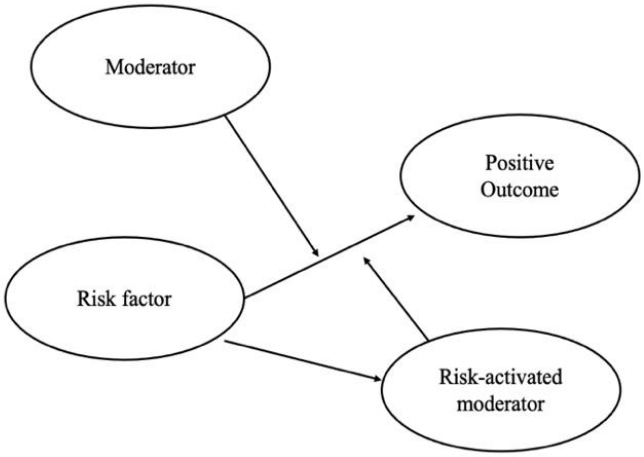
Figure 3

Moderator Model of Resilience



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1.1.2 The Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth's Adaptation

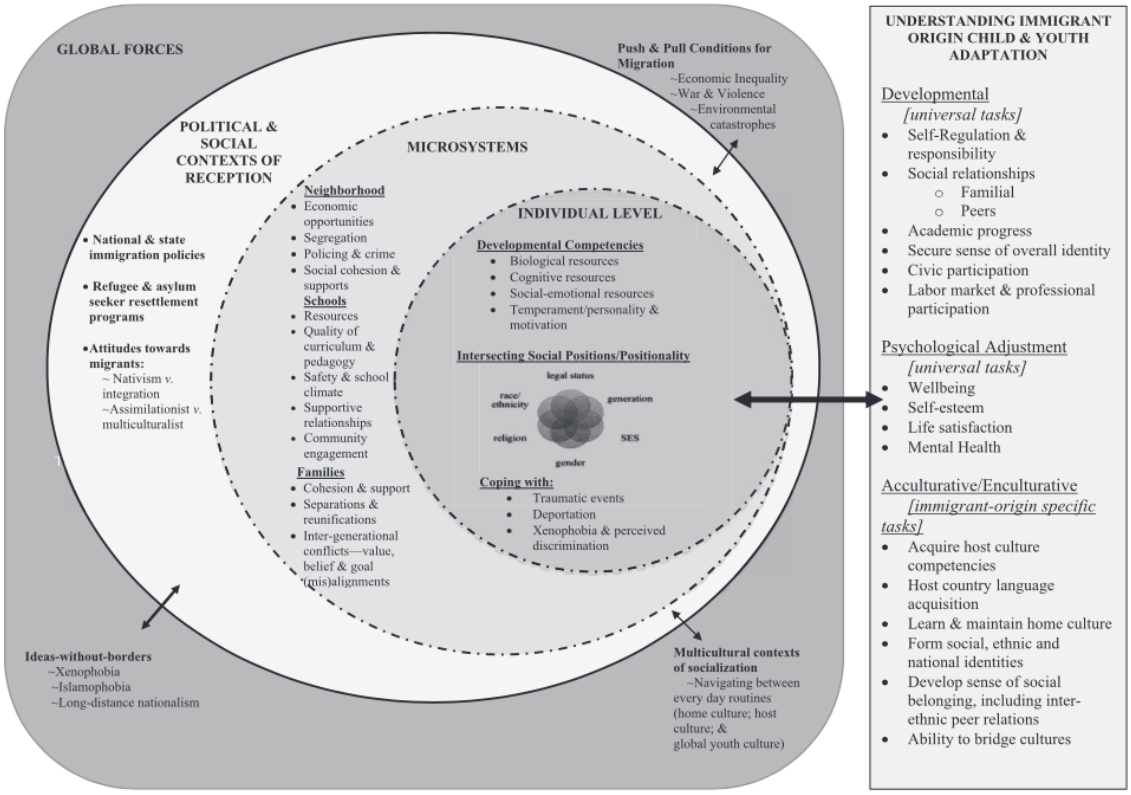
Based on Masten's risk and resilience developmental framework (2015) and influenced by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris,

2006), Garciá Coll and colleagues' integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children (Garciá Coll et al., 1996) and Motti-Stefanidi and colleagues' integrative framework for the study of immigrant-origin children and youth adaptation from a resilience perspective (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012), the integrative risk and resilience model for immigrant-origin children and youth's adaptation (IRR model) (Figure 4) constitutes the most recent model that accounts for the full complexity of acculturation within development (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). By combining these ecological and risk and resilience frameworks, the IRR model provides a model for understanding the current conditions ethnic minority children and youth encounter as they develop as well as for understanding interindividual variation in their adjustment. In addition to previous acculturation and developmental models for understanding ethnic minority children and youth's adjustment, it also includes characteristics of contexts related to undocumented immigrants and refugee youth (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

While being organized by contextual levels of influence, it includes four major nested levels: within the individual (e.g., social-position variables such as legal status, generation, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and ethnicity), within microsystems (e.g., neighborhood, school, family), within political-social contexts of reception (e.g., national and state immigration policies) and within global forces (e.g., climate change, war, poverty, criminality). Influences at each of the four levels may contribute to the children's and youth's positive adaptation in normative developmental tasks, psychological adjustment and acculturative tasks. They can function either as risks or resources for adaptation. The three indices of positive adaptation are interrelated and can inform one another. For example, the acquisition of acculturative tasks may precede the acquisition of developmental tasks or vice versa.

Figure 4

Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding the Adaptation of Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth



Note. Reprinted from "An Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding the Adaptation of Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth," by C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018, *American Psychologist*, *73*(6), p.786 (https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000265). Copyright by the American Psychological Association.

1.2 Positive Adjustment Among Ethnic Minority Youth

Based on Masten's risk and resilience developmental framework (2015) and Suárez-Orozco and colleagues' IRR model (2018), in this dissertation, I assume ethnic minority youth's experiences of discrimination at school as potential risk factors, and their personal and social resources as potential promotive and/or protective factors for their positive adjustment. Before investigating their potential roles, I will take a closer look at ethnic minority youth's various adjustment outcomes.

Acculturation research suggested the distinction between psychological and sociocultural adjustment outcomes (Ward, 2001). The first, named *psychological adjustment,* refers to ethnic minority youth's well-being and mental health. The second, named *sociocultural adjustment*, refers to ethnic minority youth's competence in managing their daily life in the intercultural setting (Berry et al., 2006).

In this dissertation, I understand positive adjustment as the accomplishment of both acculturative challenges and normative developmental tasks. Specifically, I focus on ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment in forms of their self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, depressive symptoms and their global identity resolution. In addition, I include school-integration and disruptive behavior at school as two school-related psychological adjustment outcomes. Stemming from schools' high relevance as acculturative and developmental contexts for ethnic minority youth (Schachner et al., 2018), the inclusion of school-specific adjustment is of significant importance.

1.3 Risk Factors for Ethnic Minority Youth's Positive Adjustment

As described and shown in Masten's framework (2015) and Suárez-Orozco and colleagues' IRR model (2018), various factors from different contextual levels can affect ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment. Risk factors can increase the likelihood of negative adjustment outcomes (Luthar, 2000). Previous research identified various acculturative challenges as risk factors for ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment, including language, discrimination, and family hassles (e.g., Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2018; Titzmann et al., 2011). For refugee youth, the separation from family members, bureaucratic obstacles and socio-economic strains of the family can constitute additional acculturative hassles (Alhaddad et al.; Müller et al., 2019). While generating additional stress to youth's age-related developmental tasks, acculturative challenges can also be intertwined with ethnic minority youth's normative developmental tasks (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018; Titzmann & Lee, 2018).

Against the backdrop of rising xenophobic, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic and racist views in Germany and thus the great risk for ethnic minority youth to experience discrimination at school, experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school will be examined as potential risk factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment[4]. Further, as a safe school environment with supportive teacher and peer relationships can have positive effects on ethnic minority youth's adjustment (Özdemir & Stattin, 2014, Shoshani et al., 2014), I focus on experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination by teachers and peers at school. In the following paragraphs, I will describe previous research findings and highlight current gaps in research.

1.3.1 Acculturative Challenge: Perceived Ethnic Discrimination at School

Perceived ethnic discrimination refers to the experience of being treated negatively or less fairly than others based on one's ethnic background (Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2024; Jones, 2000). Experiencing ethnic discrimination at school can evoke a feeling of being devalued because of one's ethnic group membership. Various studies showed the detrimental effects of perceived ethnic discrimination on minority youth's psychological adjustment. For example, Benner and colleagues (2018) identified perceived ethnic discrimination in their meta-analytic review of 214 studies as a predictor of 11 separate indicators of ethnic minority youth's maladjustment, such as poorer self-esteem, more depressive and internalizing symptoms, lower academic achievement and greater engagement in externalizing behaviors. In addition, Priest and colleagues (2013) and Paradies and colleagues (2015) highlighted experiences of ethnic discrimination as a significant predictor of negative mental health outcomes for ethnic minority youth.

[4] When using the term *(school-related) psychological adjustment,* I refer to both psychological adjustment outcomes and school-related psychological adjustment outcomes.

When focusing on the school context and perceived ethnic discrimination by teachers and peers, the asymmetric power relationship between teachers and students can promote differential treatment across groups of students based on the teacher's social-group membership in relation to their students (Ng, 1982). Teachers can use this asymmetric power relationship in a negative and destructive way, such as discriminatory actions against students. Research with secondary school students of Turkish and Arab descent in Germany revealed ethnic discrimination by teachers to be negatively related to youth's cognitive and emotional engagement at school (Civitillo et al., 2023). Kunyu and colleague (2021) found that also experiences of ethnic discrimination at school by peers predict declines in ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment, including greater physiological stress, depressive symptoms and disruptive school behavior.

1.3.2 Acculturative Challenge: Perceived Religious Discrimination at School

Perceived religious discrimination can be defined as the experience of being treated negatively or less fairly than others based on one's religious background (Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2024; Jones, 2000). While multiple studies focused on ethnic minority youth's experiences of ethnic discrimination, research on perceived religious discrimination at school and its implications for minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment is rare. While Sharif and colleagues (2021) found a negative relation between experiences of religious discrimination and socioemotional adjustment among a religiously diverse sample of school-aged adolescents in Australia, a study with five major religious groups (Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim) in Canada highlighted that religious discrimination is harmful to the mental health of all religious groups (Wu et al., 2019). In addition, a study with Muslim-American adolescents found that religious discrimination is related to more internalizing problems (Balkaya et al., 2019). However, most previous studies did not study experiences of religious discrimination among ethnic minority youth and did not focus on the

school context. Further, despite rising anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic incidents at German schools, the implications of perceived religious discrimination for Muslim and Jewish ethnic minority students in Germany and their school-related psychological adjustment remain understudied.

1.4 Promotive and Protective Factors for Ethnic Minority Youth's Positive Adjustment

While examining perceived ethnic and religious discrimination as potential risk factors for the (school-related) psychological adjustment among ethnic minority youth in Germany, it is also necessary to identify personal and social resources that can counteract and buffer these effects. As outlined in Masten's risk and resilience framework (2015), these resources can be described as promotive and protective factors, ensuring that children and adolescents exhibit positive adjustment outcomes despite at-risk contexts.

Based on the IRR model, in this dissertation, I understand personal resources as individual-level resources, meaning that they belong to the youth and include ascribed and achieved characteristics of the youth (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Specifically, I focus on ethnic minority youth's ethnic and religious identity. I conceptualize minority youth's ethnic and religious identity as a developmental asset that can promote and protect positive adjustment.

On the other hand, I understand social resources as resources embedded in youth's microsystems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Specifically, I focus on social support from ethnic minority youth's parents and peers. In the following paragraphs, I will describe previous research findings and highlight current gaps in research.

1.4.1 Personal Resources: Ethnic and Religious Identity

Identity formation constitutes a central developmental task during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972), a social identity is defined as "the

individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some value or emotional significance to him of his group membership" (p. 272). Given the wide range of social groups, adolescents can develop numerous social identities, including their ethnic and religious identity. Following Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, identity development constitutes a critical task during what he calls the *Identity versus Role-confusion* stage. Adolescents either develop a clear understanding of their identity (*Identity*) or fail to do so what leads to uncertainty regarding adolescent's role in life (*Role-confusion)* (Erikson, 1968). Erikson argued that identity is not readily given to the adolescent by society or appears as a maturational phenomenon. It must be acquired via an extensive process of search, observation and consideration and develops through the interplay between the adolescent and its environment. During this process adolescents must find answers to central identity questions: "Where did I come from?" "Who am I?" "What do I want to become?" (Erikson, 1968).

Expanding on Erikson's theory, Marcia (1980) developed the identity status model. In his model he categorizes four main identity statuses along the continuum of identity development. Each of the identity statuses present a possible combination with regard to the processes of identity *exploration* and *commitment*: identity diffusion (no exploration or commitment), identity moratorium (exploration without commitment), identity foreclosure (commitment without exploration), and identity achievement (exploration followed by commitment). While identity exploration refers to the process of actively acquiring information and considering multiple identity options, identity commitment involves the process of deciding and committing to an identity and integrating it into the self. Further research extended Marcia's conceptualization (e.g., Crocetti et al., 2008; Meeus, 1996).

1.4.1.1 Ethnic Identity. Using Erikson's and Marcia's theories as theoretical underpinnings, Phinney developed a three-stage model of ethnic identity development (1992).

Grounded in this work, Umaña-Taylor conceptualized ethnic-racial identity as "the beliefs and attitudes that individuals have about their ethnic-racial group memberships, as well as the processes by which these beliefs and attitudes develop over time" (2014, p. 23). As individuals pursue a stable and coherent identity, ethnic-racial identity development can be described as a normative process (Erikson, 1968; Umaña-Taylor, 2016). More precisely, the process of ethnic-racial identity exploration is pivotal for adolescents to gain an own understanding of their ethnic-racial background, resulting in a clear sense of their identity (i.e., ethnic-racial identity resolution) (Umaña-Taylor, 2016). Following Phinney's earlier conceptualizations (1992), ethnic-racial identity resolution is sometimes also referred to as commitment. In addition, ethnic-racial identity captures individuals' feelings and thoughts about their ethnic-racial group membership, which can be referred to as ethnic-racial identity affirmation (Umaña-Taylor, 2016).

When focusing on ethnic minority youth, there is a well-established relationship between ethnic identity[5] and (school-related) psychological adjustment outcomes (see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014 for an international meta-analysis). While both ethnic identity exploration and resolution have been found to be positively linked to minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment (e.g., less depressive symptoms and higher self-efficacy, self-esteem and academic engagement), ethnic identity resolution has been more consistently associated with positive adjustment compared to exploration (Umaña-Taylor, 2016). In addition, positive ethnic affect (i.e., higher ethnic identity affirmation) has been found to be positively related to (school-related) psychological adjustment (e.g., higher self-esteem and academic achievement

[5]As a response to the ethnic categorization, stigmatization, and genocide during the Holocaust, in the German context, the terms *race* and *ethnicity* were largely removed from public and political discourse (Simon, 2017). As an alternative, in the German context, individuals and groups are often categorized based on culture. In empirical works, the term ethnic-racial identity is therefore often conceptualized as heritage cultural identity, encompassing different facets of an individual's heritage culture, such as ethnicity and religion. As previous research showed that youth do distinguish in their self-identification between their religious and ethnic group membership to some extent (Fleischmann et al., 2019), I decided to use the terms *ethnic identity* and *religious identity* in this dissertation and to study their distinct roles regarding ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment.

and less depressive symptoms, internalizing and externalizing problems) (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

In addition, ethnic identity can serve as a protective factor, assuming that feeling connected with one's ethnic group can offset the negative impact of risk on ethnic minority youth's adjustment (Umaña-Taylor, 2023). Multiple studies highlighted ethnic minority youth's ethnic identity as a significant moderator that buffers the detrimental effects of perceived ethnic discrimination on youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment (e.g., Umaña-Taylor, 2012; Yip et al., 2021). Research with first, second and third-generation youth of immigrant descent in Germany found a significant association between higher ethnic identity and better socioemotional and academic adjustment. In addition, they found ethnic identity to act as a protective factor against the negative effects of perceived ethnic discrimination (Kunyu et al., 2021). Having a closer look at the distinct components of ethnic identity and their protective roles in the context of perceived discrimination, strongest evidence was found for ethnic identity affirmation (Umaña-Taylor, 2016).

Next to the moderating role of ethnic identity, previous research also argued for a mediating role of ethnic identity. More precisely, Branscombe and colleagues (1999) proposed, with their rejection-identification model, that perceptions of pervasive discrimination against an ingroup would lead to increased identification with that ingroup, that, in turn, would result in better adjustment. This was confirmed, for example, by a study by Brittian and colleagues (2014), who found ethnic identity affirmation to mediate the relation between ethnic discrimination and depressive symptoms among a sample of ethnic minority college students in the US. Research in Germany still needs to elaborate the potential mediating role of ethnic identity.

1.4.1.2 Religious Identity. While much research on social identity has focused on ethnic identity (development), research largely overlooked religious identity (development).

Even if religion and ethnicity are often strongly intertwined and influence each other (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996), research among ethnic minority youth indicated that youth do distinguish in their self-identification between their religious and ethnic group membership to some extent (Fleischmann et al., 2019). When reviewing recent research, it is striking that most research on religious identity development is limited to majority Christian children and adolescents (Güngor et al., 2013). The few studies of ethnic minority youth mainly focus on ethnic identity development rather than their religious identity development (Phalet et al., 2018).

Still, a small number of studies focused on the religious identity development among Muslim ethnic minority youth and its potential promotive and protective roles for ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment. While a longitudinal qualitative study with Muslim students in the US identified three stages of religious identity development (i.e., religion as ascribed identity, religion as chosen identity and religion as declared identity; Peek, 2005), studies with Muslim minority adolescents showed that religious identity can act as a promotive factor for their psychological and behavioral adjustment (e.g., Balkaya et al., 2019; Tineo et al., 2021). For example, a study with Muslim-American adolescents revealed the promotive role of Muslim identity, resulting in less internalizing and externalizing problems of the adolescents (Balkaya et al., 2019). Regarding the potential protective role of Muslim identity, Maes and colleagues (2013) found that ethnic minority girls who lived in the Netherlands and who identified strongly with their religious group showed more internalizing and externalizing problems when experiencing ethnic discrimination. This rather points to a sensitizing role of Muslim identity. Additional research is needed to confirm the sensitizing role of Muslim identity in the context of perceived discrimination. Further, future research among ethnic minority youth focusing on the potential promotive and protective roles of religious identity in

the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination should also consider the different components of religious identity development.

1.4.2 Social Resources: Parental and Peer Support

In addition to personal resources, ethnic minority youth may possess social resources that help them to foster their (school-related) psychological adjustment and to respond to experiences of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination. Social support, encompassing various forms of assistance and care (e.g., emotional support such as empathy and practical support such as tangible assistance) that individuals receive from their social network members, has been found in multiple studies as a facilitator for the positive adjustment for immigrants (e.g., Guruge et al., 2015; Levitt et al., 2009). While supportive parent-adolescent relationships are an important resource for the positive development of children and adolescents, so are supportive relationships with one's peers, which become increasingly important during adolescence (Steinberg et al., 2001).

1.4.2.1 Parental Support. Claiming that parents' provision of consistent and responsive support leads to a sense of trust and competence in children, the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) highlights the importance of supportive parent-child relationships for children's psychological well-being. In accordance, several studies revealed the beneficial effect of positive relationships between ethnic minority youth and their parents on their psychological adjustment (see Sun et al., 2016 for a meta-analytic review). In addition to its promotive role, parental support has also been claimed as a protective factor for youth. By fostering a closer bond between the parents and the adolescent, parental support can create a sense of security and trust and allows for more open communication (Bowlby, 1969). Previous research among African American adolescents supported this by revealing supportive parental behavior as a protective factor between perceived ethnic discrimination and ethnic minority youth's behavior conduct problems (Simons et al., 2006). Still, research is required on the promotive and

protective roles of parental support for ethnic minority youth in Germany.

1.4.2.2 Peer Support. Supportive peers may also serve as promotive and protective factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination. Developmental considerations and previous studies (Brown & Larson, 2009; Steinberg et al., 2001) revealed increased importance of peer support during adolescence. Thus, the promotive and protective roles of peer support may especially grow in importance during this developmental period. Indeed, research highlighted supportive peer relationships as a promotive factor for ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment (Shoshani et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2008). For example, a study among immigrant adolescents in Israel revealed supportive peer relationships to be correlated with higher self-esteem and better mental health outcomes (Shoshani et al., 2014). Concerning the question of whether peer support would act as a protective factor, research has yet to study the relations between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school, peer support and ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. Against the backdrop that peer support may primarily act for first-generation immigrant youth and refugee youth as a protective factor, as parents often cannot support the youth due to own acculturative challenges and stress from the acculturation process, possible differences across immigrant generations should also be examined.

1.5 The German (School) Context: Everyday Racism and Discrimination

In this dissertation, I focus on the positive adjustment of ethnic minority youth in Germany. As outlined in Suárez-Orozco and colleagues' IRR-model (2018), the political, economic, and social contexts of reception can influence short-term and long-term adjustment. Therefore, it is crucial to briefly examine the particularities of the German context.

After WWII, Germany registered a first major wave of immigration. To help rebuild the post-WWII country, in the 1950s and 1960s, Germany recruited so-called guest workers as

temporary labor migrants, mainly from Turkey and Southern Europe (Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2021). This first major wave of immigration was followed by a peak at the beginning of the 1990s, after German reunification. In addition to asylum seekers, many ethnic German repatriates ("Aussiedler")[6] came to Germany in the early 1990s. Starting from 2015, Germany has welcomed a large number of refugees (Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2021; Schneider, 2018). In 2015, Germany temporarily suspended the Dublin Regulation[7] and witnessed the highest number of asylum applications in its recorded history. Almost a third of these applications were submitted by youth under the age of 20 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016). Since the number of asylum applications had declined after 2016, it reached a new high in 2022 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2023).

However, acknowledging being an immigration country came relatively late after many politicians persistently claimed the opposite (Bommes, 2011). In Germany a wide range of attitudes and behaviors towards immigrants and refugees exists. While, on the one hand, many efforts have been and are being made to integrate immigrants and refugees into society and the labor market, on the other hand, the societal climate is often perceived as assimilationist. Those perceived as "non-German" and of "immigrant descent" are expected to assimilate to "the" German culture to protect cultural homogeneity (Risse, 2018; Yagmur & van de Vijver, 2012).

In addition to the assimilationist climate, xenophobia and (anti-Muslim) racism are rising and widespread among a large part of the German population (German Centre of Integration and Migration Research, 2023). Racism can be defined as an ideological system of dominance, power, and privilege that involves the belief that certain racial or ethnic groups are inherently inferior or superior to others. While it includes the systematic oppression and

[6] The term "Aussiedler" dates back to the early 1950s. After the end of flight and expulsion in the aftermath of WWII, in 1950, around four million Germans were still living in eastern, east-central, and south-eastern Europe (Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2021).

[7] The Regulation pursues the purpose of ensuring quick access to the asylum procedures by determining which State is responsible for examining the asylum application. Usually, this is the State where the asylum seeker first entered the European Union (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.).

marginalization of individuals based on their race or ethnicity[8], racism can manifest in various forms, e.g., on the behavioral level in forms of discriminatory actions (Garner, 2009; Harrell, 2000).

As stated in the report of the National Discrimination and Racism Monitor by the German Centre of Integration and Migration Research (2023), racism in Germany is part of everyday life. However, racism is not openly discussed in Germany; rather there is a "silence about race" in both political and social discourse (Lentin, 2008; Roig, 2017). While being related to WWII history and to the discourse of overcoming the past of the national-socialist racist ideology and the Holocaust, the "silence about race" leads to the neglect and non-acknowledgement of everyday racism (Roig, 2017). The neglect to openly talk about racism and the assimilationist climate also predominate the German school context. Schools and teachers often lack the necessary knowledge and resources to effectively prepare children and youth in navigating and comprehending racism. Consequently, encounters with racism and experiences of discrimination often remain unaddressed and are normalized (Juang et al., 2021). This also includes racism and discriminatory actions against Muslim youth.

Different terms are used to describe hostility towards Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim. Nowadays, the term *Islamophobia* is often used in public discourse to refer to hostility and discrimination towards Muslims (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2023). However, the term is often criticized as it suggests that hostility and discriminatory actions towards Muslims are solely a problem of individual bias and are an individual's "phobia" while failing to include its structural and systemic production. While including also the systemic and

[8] *Race* refers to "a characterization of a group of people believed to share physical characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and other hereditary traits" (Cokley, 2007). *Ethnicity* refers to "a characterization of a group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as having a common ancestry, shared history, shared traditions, and shared cultural traits such as language, beliefs, values, music, dress, and food" (Cokley, 2007).

structural dimensions, the use of the term *Anti-Muslim racism*[9] is argued for by many researchers nowadays (Beutel & Kummer, 2021).

In Germany, anti-Muslim racism is present in various areas of society, including education, employment, and the housing market (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2023). It is crucial to mention that in Germany and in Europe more broadly, the concept of nativity is tied to Christian religion, resulting in an outgroup position for Muslims (Alaba & Foner, 2015). While common associations linked to Muslims in Germany include terms such as "backwards", "intolerant" and "fanatic", almost a quarter of Germans think that "Muslim immigration to Germany should be stopped" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2023; Germen Institute for Human Rights, 2008). Further, Islam is often equated with Islamism, so that Muslims are often under general suspicion when Islamists commit atrocities. At school, Muslim youth often experience anti-Muslim racism in the form of direct or indirect discrimination from teachers and peers (Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, 2019).

1.6 This Dissertation

The theoretical considerations and the review of literature outlined in the previous paragraphs lead to the development of an overarching goal and four specific research aims for this dissertation. The overarching goal of my dissertation is to investigate resources helping ethnic minority youth in Germany to foster their positive adjustment, specifically in the context of perceived discrimination at school. Contrary to previous research that mainly focused on maladjustment and deficit environments, I want to take a resource-oriented perspective on ethnic minority youth by not only focusing on their challenges but also on personal and social resources regarding their positive adjustment. The following four specific research aims were developed:

[9] When using the term anti-Muslim racism, it must be noted that the religious affiliation to Islam is not understood as "race".

1.6.1 Research Gaps and Specific Research Aims

Since previous research mainly centered around ethnic minority youth's experiences of discrimination in their general living environment, research specifically focusing on the context of school is rare. In addition, previous studies focused to a large extent on experiences of ethnic discrimination and neglected experiences of religious discrimination and its impact on ethnic minority youth's adjustment so far. This gap leads to the first research aim:

Research Aim 1: Examine perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school as *risk factors* for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment.

The lack of studies taking a resource-oriented perspective on ethnic minority youth's adjustment makes it necessary to reveal factors promoting and protecting ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment. So far, it is unclear if such promotive and protective factors in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school are situated on both the personal and social levels, rather on the personal level than on the social level, or the other way round. While developmental psychology research points to the central role of identity in promoting and protecting youth's positive adjustment, it typically did not include the role of religious identity among ethnic minority youth. In addition, research points to the beneficial role of social support for youth's development but rarely focused on ethnic minority youth. This leads to the second research aim:

Research Aim 2: Examine resources – on the personal and social level – that promote and protect ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school. On the personal level, I aim to investigate ethnic and religious identity as *promotive*

and *protective* factors. On the social level, I aim to investigate parental and peer support as *promotive* and *protective* factors.

When investigating the promotive and protective role of religious identity, little is known about how the components of religious identity development (i.e., religious identity exploration and resolution) are related to ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment and their experiences of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school. This leads to the third research aim:

Research Aim 3: Investigate how the components of religious identity development (i.e., religious identity exploration and resolution) are related to ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school.

Ethnic minority youth face numerous acculturative challenges next to their normative developmental tasks. Previous research suggests that these challenges differ among different groups of ethnic minority youth (e.g., between first-generation immigrant youth and second-generation youth of immigrant descent). However, it has not been examined yet whether they affect groups of ethnic minority youth in different ways and whether personal and social resources and their potential to act as promotive and protective factors also differ between these groups. This leads to the fourth research aim:

Research Aim 4: Explore similarities and differences in the relations between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school, personal (i.e., ethnic and religious identity) and social resources (i.e., parental and peer support), and (school-

related) psychological adjustment between different groups of ethnic minority youth (e.g., based on their acculturation context and religious identification).

1.6.2 Empirical Chapters and Connection to Research Aims

To achieve my four research aims, I conducted four empirical studies each addressing multiple of my research aims. The studies constitute the empirical part of this dissertation (Chapters 2–5). Since the empirical chapters are written as stand-alone papers, the terminology used across the chapters may vary. However, in all chapters of this dissertation, I use the term *ethnic minority youth* to refer to youth who are minoritized (meaning that they generally experience a low status in society) due to their ethnicity. Unless not otherwise stated, in this dissertation ethnic minority youth encompass refugee youth, first-generation immigrant youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent. Figure 5 provides an overview of my four empirical studies related to my four research aims.

The four empirical studies are based on three different data sets, which were collected in four different federal states in Germany (Saxony-Anhalt, Berlin, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia). Chapter 2 uses cross-sectional data that I collected in secondary schools, mosques, youth migration services, refugee shelters and German language courses for refugees in Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia within my master thesis project. I collected the data with my master's thesis supervisor, Zeynep Demir, at Bielefeld University. Chapter 3 draws on qualitative data that I collected as part of a project on belonging and identity in schools in Saxony-Anhalt collaboratively with my colleagues Sophie Hölscher and Dr. Lina Alhaddad from the Martin-Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg and with my former colleague Dr. Nadya Gharaei from the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research. Chapters 4 and 5 are based on (longitudinal) data that was collected as part of a school-based intervention (the *Identity Project*) in culturally diverse schools in Saxony-Anhalt and Berlin. The Identity

Project aims to support adolescents in their ethnic identity formation and was first developed and successfully tested in the US (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017a; 2017b). Coordinated by my first supervisor, Prof. Dr. Maja Schachner, and Prof. Dr. Linda Juang from Potsdam University, we adapted the program to the German context, more precisely to the context of Berlin and then to the context of Halle (Saxony-Anhalt) (e.g., Juang et al., 2020; 2022). While students from classrooms in the intervention group received the 8-week Identity Project intervention, their peers from classrooms in the control group were put on a waitlist. They received the intervention at a later point. Data was collected in the intervention and control group one week before the start of the intervention in the intervention group (T1– pretest), one week after (T2 – posttest) and eight weeks after the intervention and before implementing the intervention in the control group (T3 – follow up). While Chapter 4 draws on cross-sectional data from T1, Chapter 5 is based on longitudinal data from T1 to T3.

First, I used the dataset from my master's thesis to investigate the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination at school, social resources and ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment (Chapter 2/Study 1, addressing research aims 1 and 2). Driven by the aim to focus on what is important for ethnic minority youth, I proceeded to examine the interplay of ethnic minority youth's acculturative challenges, developmental tasks, and resources (Chapter 3/Study 2, addressing research aims 1, 2 and 3). To not only investigate the potential of social resources but also of ethnic minority youth's personal resources, I further examined ethnic minority youth's ethnic and religious identity as potential promotive and protective factors for their positive adjustment when being faced with experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school (Chapters 4 and 5/Studies 3 and 4, addressing research aims 1 and 2). To focus on ethnic minority youth's religious identity development, I additionally examined how the components of religious identity development are related to youth's positive adjustment and their experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school (Chapter 5/Study 4,

addressing research aim 3). Across all studies, I focused on different groups of ethnic minority youth. While I explored similarities and differences in the relations mentioned above among refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Chapters 2 and 3 (Studies 1 and 2), I focused on Muslim ethnic minority youth in Chapters 4 and 5 (Studies 3 and 4). In the following, I provide short summaries of each chapter.

Chapter 2 (Study 1): Do parental and peer support protect adjustment in the face of ethnic discrimination? A comparison between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent

Chapter 2 is related to my master's thesis and is based on a dataset of 104 ethnic minority youth that were, on average, 17.73 years old, including refugee youth (n = 55) and second-and third-generation youth of immigrant descent (n = 49). Data were collected in Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia in secondary schools (9th grade), mosques, youth migration services, refugee shelters and German language courses for refugees. I investigated how perceived ethnic discrimination at school is related to minority youth's positive adjustment. In addition, I examined the promotive and protective roles of parental and peer support in the relation between perceived ethnic discrimination at school and minority youth's positive adjustment. Lastly, I explored differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent.

Based on previous research (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2013; Shoshani et al., 2014), I hypothesized that higher experiences of perceived ethnic discrimination at school would be associated with less positive adjustment (i.e., in forms of less self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism and school integration) and that receiving higher parental and peer support would be associated with higher positive adjustment outcomes. Moving beyond existing research, I simultaneously tested parental and peer support as promotive and protective factors in the association between perceived ethnic discrimination and positive adjustment for ethnic

minority youth in Germany. Finally, I explored if the relations would differ between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent.

Chapter 2 offers insights into the relations between perceived ethnic discrimination at school, social resources and positive adjustment among different groups of ethnic minority students but did not consider the role of perceived religious discrimination and ethnic minority youth's personal resources. This gap will be addressed in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 (Study 2): "They are my safe haven": The importance of personal and social resources for refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent mastering acculturative challenges and developmental tasks

In Chapter 3, I focus on refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descent's perspectives on their acculturative challenges, developmental tasks and resources in Germany. The data for this chapter was collected through eleven interviews with six refugee youth and five second-generation youth of immigrant descent. The 9th graders were, on average, 15.45 years old and attended culturally diverse schools in Saxony-Anhalt.

I examined what acculturative challenges and developmental tasks refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent face in Germany. Moving beyond existing research, I paid special attention to the interplay of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks and possible differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. In addition, I investigated what resources the youth possess to master their acculturative challenges and developmental tasks and to foster their positive adjustment.

Surprisingly, refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent referred to the importance of social resources when coping with ethnic and religious discrimination but did not refer to their personal resources. Thus, I decided to delve more deeply into the roles of personal

resources (i.e., ethnic and religious identity) in the relationships between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination and positive adjustment in Chapters 4 and 5 (Studies 3 and 4)

Chapter 4 (Study 3): Ethno-religious discrimination and adjustment among Muslim adolescents: The promotive and protective roles of ethnic and religious identification

Chapter 4 is based on data collected in culturally diverse schools in Saxony-Anhalt and Berlin as part of the Identity Project. More precisely, this chapter draws on T1 data of 105 Muslim ethnic minority youth who participated in the Identity Project. The 7th graders were, on average, 13.30 years old. I investigated how perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school are related to Muslim ethnic minority youth's psychological and behavioral adjustment. Moving beyond existing research, I examined the promotive and protective roles of religious identity (affirmation), next to ethnic identity (affirmation), for Muslim youth's positive adjustment.

I expected that high experiences of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination would be associated with lower psychological and behavioral adjustment (i.e., in forms of more depressive symptoms, less self-esteem and more disruptive behavior at school). Consistent with research showing that higher ethnic (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2014) and religious (e.g., Balkaya et al., 2019) identity have beneficial effects on ethnic minority youth's adjustment, I assumed Muslim ethnic minority youth to show better adjustment when they identify highly with their ethnic and/or religious group. Lastly, I expected that Muslim youth's ethnic and religious identity would buffer the adverse effects of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination on the youth's positive adjustment.

Unexpectedly, I found that the measures of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination mapped onto a joint construct of perceived ethno-religious discrimination. Thus, it seems that for discrimination experiences, it is hard for Muslim ethnic minority youth to distinguish

whether others discriminate on ethnic or religious grounds. Consequently, the construct of perceived ethno-religious discrimination was also used in Chapter 5 (Study 4). Chapter 4 provides insights into the relationships between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination and positive adjustment while also looking at the promotive and protective roles of ethnic identity (affirmation) and religious identity (affirmation).

Chapter 5 (Study 4): Religious identity development and psychological adjustment among Muslim adolescents: Results from the *Identity Project* intervention in Germany

As well as Chapter 4, Chapter 5 draws on data that was collected as part of the Identity Project. More precisely, it draws on longitudinal data (T1 to T3) of 128 Muslim ethnic minority youth who took part in the school-based intervention. Students were on average 13.43 years old.

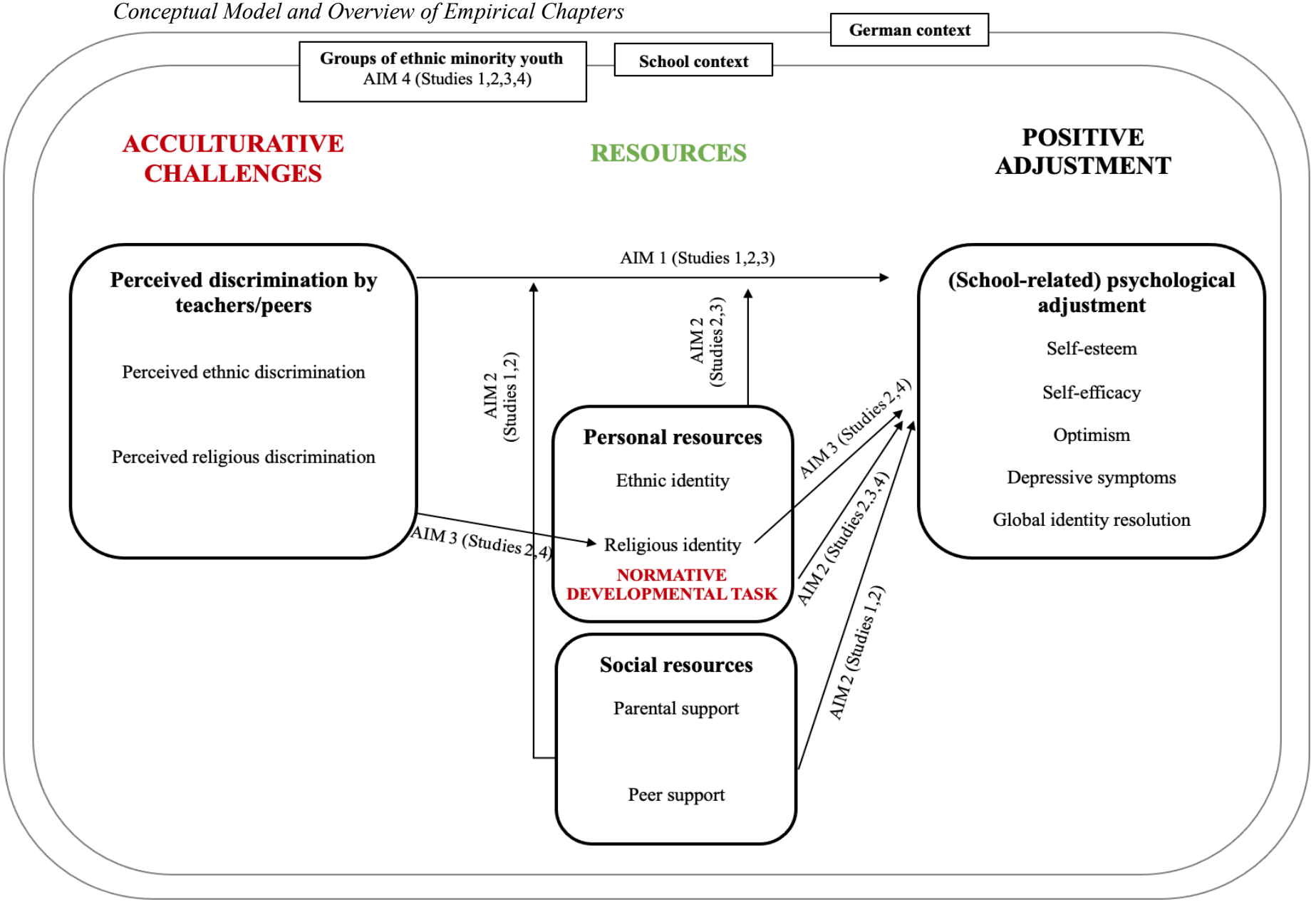
While focusing on the development of Muslim ethnic minority youth's religious identity and how it is related to their psychological adjustment (i.e., in forms of higher self-esteem, less depressive symptoms and higher global identity), I also investigated how experiences of perceived ethno-religious discrimination at school are related to Muslim youth's religious identity development, i.e., if they initiate the process of religious identity development.

Based on previous findings on ethnic identity development by Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2017a; 2017b), I hypothesized that Muslim youth in the intervention group compared to Muslim youth in the control group would show an increase in religious identity exploration at T2, which would produce increases in religious identity resolution and would result in better psychological adjustment at T3. Further, I expected that Muslim ethnic minority youth who perceive higher ethno-religious discrimination at T1 would show higher religious identity resolution at T3, which would be mediated by increases in religious identity exploration at T2.

While delving deeply into Muslim youth's religious identity development, Chapter 5 offers insights into the promotive role of religious identity and its relation to perceived ethno-religious discrimination.

Figure 5

Conceptual Model and Overview of Empirical Chapters



2 Study 1: Do Parental and Peer Support Protect Adjustment in the Face of Ethnic Discrimination? – A Comparison between Refugee Youth and Youth of Immigrant Descent

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Abstract

Applying a risk and protection perspective, this study paid special attention to the protective roles of parental & peer support in the face of perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) at school. Responding to the inconsistent findings of previous research, the study provides greater clarity regarding the interactions between PED at school, social support, and positive adjustment (self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism & school integration). The sample comprised 104 minority youth (M_{age} = 17.73, SD_{age} = 3.29, 61% female), including refugee youth (n = 55) and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent (n = 49). Structural equation models across the whole sample confirmed peer support as a significant moderator, indicating that minority youth receiving low peer support were less optimistic when facing PED. In multi-group models we tested whether results differ across refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. Results revealed between-group differences concerning the moderating roles of parental and peer support: For youth of immigrant descent, while more PED was associated with lower self-esteem when receiving low parental support, we found a positive association between PED and optimism when receiving high parental support. Based on the findings that refugee youth showed to be less optimistic when obtaining low peer support, the main interaction effect for peer support on optimism seemed to be driven by refugee youth. The results highlight the importance of identifying specific social support factors for specific adjustment outcomes and also the importance of differentiating between minority groups. Further, the findings offer practical implications for the educational sector in terms of programs focusing on the development of peer support networks to especially promote refugee youth's resettlement and resilience.

Keywords: Perceived ethnic discrimination, refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent, positive adjustment, social support

2.1 Introduction

European societies are heavily characterized by migration and cultural diversity. In 2015 more than 240 million international migrants were recorded, approximating 3.3% of the world's population. From 2015 to 2017, Europe and Germany have witnessed the largest immigration movement in their recent recorded history. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2015), approximately 500.000 asylum applications were submitted in Germany in 2015. Almost a third of these applications were submitted by youth under the age of 20 (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2015). Next to refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent[1] represent a large proportion of Germany's population. They are defined as those who have at least one foreign-born parent or grand-parent and either have been born outside (first generation) or within (second- and third-generation) Germany (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Together, refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent aged under 20 cover more than one third of the age-matched population in Germany (German Youth Institute, 2020). It is thus clearly in the best interest of the German society, to promote the positive adjustment of these young immigrant populations. Like their non-immigrant descent peers, ethnic minority youth[2] face numerous developmental challenges such as forming relationships with friends and family, a cohesive and secure sense of identity and developing responsibility (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Unlike their non-immigrant descent peers, they further have to cope with significant acculturative challenges (Kunyu et al., 2021; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012; Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016). Acculturation can be described as a dynamic process through which individuals and groups from different cultures who are engaging in sustained contact adapt to one another. For ethnic minority youth specifically,

[1] The Federal Government Expert Commission (2021) has recommended to no longer use the term "migration background" to aggregate immigrants of second and later generations, but rather "immigrants and their direct descendants". Thus, we use the term "youth of immigrant descent" to describe the youth in our sample who are descents of immigrants - as distinct from the "refugee youth" in our sample, who have recently migrated to and sought refuge in Germany.

[2] This term refers to youth who are minoritized due to their ethnicity.

salient stressors can arise from the acculturation process (Berry et al., 2006). In this study, we focus on perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) as a major acculturative hassle which has been found in several studies to have detrimental consequences for the adjustment of ethnic minority youth (Guerra et al., 2019; Juang et al., 2016; Schmitt et al., 2014). As a safe school environment with positive teacher and peer relations has substantial influence on youth development (Furrer et al., 2014) and school forms one of the most important acculturative contexts for minority youth, we focus on PED at school by teachers and peers. Paying special attention to the rising numbers of refugee youth in Germany and the insufficient research on PED in relation to adjustment especially for refugee youth, we are particularly interested in possible differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in our study.

PED can be defined as the experience of being treated negatively based on one's ethnic background (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003) and has been identified as a powerful predictor of minority youth maladjustment (Benner et al., 2018; Brown & Chu, 2012; Schachner et al., 2018). The adjustment of immigrants and their descendants can be structured as encompassing both psychological and sociocultural outcomes (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991). While psychological adjustment captures their general well-being and mental health, sociocultural adjustment addresses cultural skills and functionally adaptive behaviors (Ward, 2001; Wilson et al., 2017).

When studying the influence of PED on adolescents' psychological development, the work on risk and protective factors offers a useful framework (Wong et al., 2003). While risk factors can be defined as "individual or environmental hazards that increase an individual's vulnerability for negative developmental behaviors, events, or outcomes" (Perkins & Borden, 2003, p. 385), protective factors serve as buffers so that the relations between risks and negative developmental outcomes are mitigated (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Jessor et al., 1995; Wong et al., 2003). Thus, beyond viewing PED as a risk factor, this perspective considers factors that

can protect the positive development of ethnic minority youth in the face of PED. In the past, studies on the effects of ethnic discrimination have been criticized for focusing mainly on negative consequences and deficit environments (Benner et al., 2018). In response to this criticism, the model of developmental risk and protective factors addresses psychological and environmental protective factors that can buffer against negative adjustment outcomes related to PED.

In this study, we specifically explore the role of PED at school by teachers and peers on ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment (in terms of their self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school integration) while considering peer and parental support as possible protective factors. It extends previous research in five ways, namely by a) specifically examining the role of PED in the context of school instead of focusing on the general living environment of minority youth in Germany; b) focusing on different aspects of positive adjustment (self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism and school integration); c) including three psychological (self-esteem, self-efficacy and optimism) and one sociocultural (school integration) indicator of adjustment, while most studies with immigrants only focus on psychological outcomes (Bierwiaczonek & Waldzus, 2016); d) considering the distinct roles of two key relational contexts by simultaneously testing parental and peer support as buffering factors concerning the relation between PED and adjustment; and e) by including both, refugee youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent, allowing to explore potential differences in the risk and protective roles of PED and social support for their adjustment.

Perceived Ethnic Discrimination as a Risk Factor for Positive Adjustment

Being in an unsupportive and rejecting environment where individuals do not feel a sense of acceptance and relatedness, has been found to be a serious risk factor for adjustment (Jessor et al., 1995). Studies have shown that youth who are teased or called names by their

peers at school have a higher chance to have a lower self-esteem and to do poorly in school (Juvonen et al., 2011; Skues et al., 2005). In addition, adolescents who feel that their teachers do not respect or care about them, were identified to show more negative socioemotional and academic outcomes (Delfabbro et al., 2006; Whitted & Dupper, 2007). Overall, these messages of devaluation by teachers and peers can lead to negative developmental outcomes. Similarly, minority adolescents' experiences of ethnic discrimination at school by teachers and peers can evoke the feeling of being devaluated because of one's ethnic group membership. Thus, and as stated by Suárez-Orozco and colleagues (2018) in their risk and resilience model, PED can act as a risk factor for minority youth, increasing the probability of negative developmental outcomes. In their meta-analytic study, Benner et al. (2018) showed the pernicious effects of PED for adolescents on different indicators of well-being, such as poorer self-esteem, more depressive symptoms, greater psychological distress, and lower academic achievements. In addition, Paradies et al. (2006) and Priest et al. (2013) highlighted PED as an important predictor negatively affecting minority youth adjustment. In the current study, we specifically focus on PED at school by teachers and peers. Drawing on social identity theory, the asymmetric power relationship between teachers and students can promote differential treatment across groups of students based on teachers' own social group membership in relation to their students (Ng, 1982). Teachers can use this asymmetric power relationship either in a positive and supportive way, or in a negative and destructive way. Studies revealed that experiences with ethnic discrimination by teachers are related to lower self-esteem, a weaker sense of school belonging and a poorer mental health (Fisher et al., 2000, Thomas et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2003). Greene and colleagues (2006) found that also experiences of racial discrimination at school from one's peers predict declines in mental health, including increases in depression and decreases in self-esteem and psychological resilience. These results accord with several meta-analyses (Paradies et al., 2015; Priest et al., 2013; Schmitt et al., 2014), which

all identified a strong association between PED and poor adjustment in minority youth. Indeed, the experience of ethnic discrimination was associated with low levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction, sense of coherence and high levels of depressive symptoms and other forms of psychological distress (Paradies et al., 2015; Priest et al., 2013; Schmitt et al., 2014). Considering the potential threat of PED to the healthy development of minority youth, PED can be classified as a high-risk factor for minority youth positive adjustment (Perkins & Borden, 2003; Wong et al., 2003). Keeping in mind that most research on PED and possible adjustment outcomes has been conducted with ethnic minority youth in the US, we are particularly interested in studying these associations amongst refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Germany. In light of the past findings, we expect that PED at school decreases positive adjustment (in forms of self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school-integration) amongst refugee youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent in our current study.

Two Potential Protective Factors: Parental and Peer Support

While examining to what extent PED provides a risk for positive adjustment amongst ethnic minority youth in Germany, it is necessary to identify factors than can buffer these effects. Within a risk and resilience framework in developmental psychology, protective factors can ensure that children and adolescents exhibit positive developmental outcomes despite at-risk contexts and challenges during adolescence (Masten, 2014). Protective factors serve as buffers, ensuring that the relation between risks and problematic development is attenuated (Jessor et al., 1995; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Several studies (e.g., Allen et al., in press; Corradi & Levrau, 2021) showed that individuals with access to protective factors are likely to demonstrate more positive adjustment in comparison to those who do not.

There are a number of different strategies minority youth use to respond to ethnic discrimination (Skinner et al., 2003). In the present study, we examined whether social support

acts as a protective factor while diminishing the detrimental effects of PED on the positive adjustment of ethnic minority youth. When confronting PED, social support has been considered as an emotion-focused strategy (Tull et al., 2005) that indicates the availability of network members who express concern, love and care for the individual (Koskinen et al., 2015). Several studies have shown that individuals are better able to cope with difficult circumstances when there is social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Levitt, 2005; Reinhardt et al., 2006) and emphasized the role of social support as a facilitator for the positive adjustment of immigrants (Portes & Rumbau, 2001). Further, the risk and resilience framework (Masten, 2014) emphasizes social support as an important protective factor for youth, while several studies identified social support as a commonly used coping strategy in the face of PED (Brondolo et al., 2009; Liang et al., 2007; Swim et al., 2003; Utsey et al., 2000).

We specifically look at parental and peer support as two potential protective factors whose mitigating effects are under-studied in the field of PED and as protective factors of ethnic minority youth adjustment. In this study, we add to the literature by simultaneously testing the role of parental and peer support for the relationships between PED at school and multiple outcomes (self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school-integration), as well as by studying these associations across two groups, namely refugee youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent.

The quality of the parent-child relationship is an important factor for the development of children and adolescents. Claiming that parents' provision of consistent and responsive support leads to a sense of trust and competence in children, the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) emphasizes the importance of supportive parent-child relationships for children's and adolescents' emotional well-being. A number of studies have revealed that supportive parent-adolescent relationships characterized by secure attachments are related to positive psychological outcomes for youth, such as fewer mental health problems, lower levels of

antisocial and aggressive behavior and more adaptive coping strategies (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Furthermore, parental support seems to have a similar beneficial effect on adjustment and health outcomes across racialized groups (Hoskins, 2014; Wills et al., 2004). For example, the meta-analysis of Sun et al. (2016) revealed that positive relationships between minority children of various racialized groups and their parents play a significant supportive role for their mental health. Better parent-child relationships were related to fewer mental health problems and better mental health outcomes.

Parental support has also been claimed as a protective factor for youth by fostering a closer bond between the parent and the child and consequently allowing for more open communication within the parent-child relationship and creating a sense of security for the child (Bowlby, 1969). Indeed, studies of African American adolescents revealed supportive parental behavior as a buffer in the associations between perceived discrimination and behavior conduct problems and substance use (Gibbons et al., 2010; Simons et al., 2006). Additionally, nurturant-involved parenting that includes emotional support, instrumental assistance and communication about potential areas of concern between parents and their children revealed to weaken the association between perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms. Yet, others found social support networks not to moderate the perceived discrimination-mental health association (Fisher and Shaw, 1999).

Supportive peers may also serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of PED. Developmental considerations indicate an increased importance of peer support during adolescence (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). As the relationship with one's peers becomes increasingly important during adolescence, the protective effects of peer support seem especially to grow in importance in this developmental period (O'Connell et al., 2009). Studies have found that supportive peer relationships increase the psychological well-being of minority youth (Shoshani et al., 2014; Stewart at al., 2008). In addition, having a strong attachment with

ethnic peers have been found to facilitate acculturation and enhance levels of well-being (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Concerning the question whether peer support would moderate the relation between PED and positive adjustment outcomes, a stress-buffering model suggests that peer support would interact with PED to protect ethnic minority youth from the negative effects of PED (Hodges et al., 1999).

Thus, in our study we tested parental and peer support as possible buffers for both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. In addition, we had a closer look at possible similarities and differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent, considering the insufficient research on PED and possible buffering effects especially in the case of refugee youth.

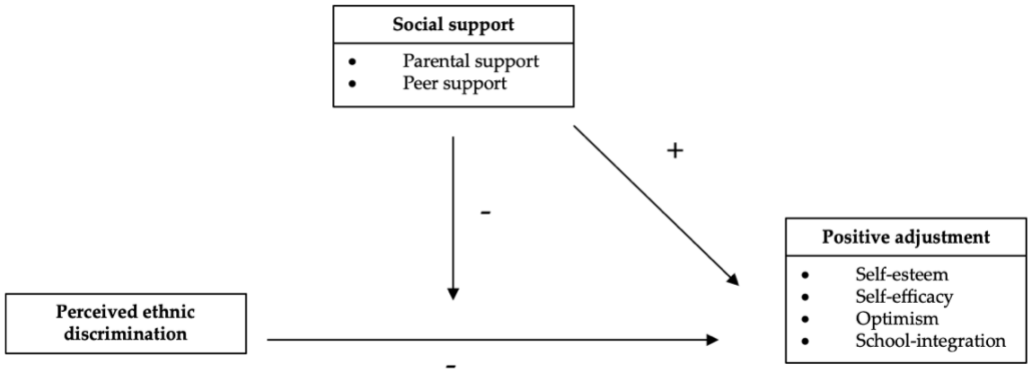
The Present Study

As shown in Figure 1, we investigated the associations of social support (parental and peer support) and different aspects of positive adjustment (self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school integration) among ethnic minority youth in Germany in the event of experiencing PED at school. Using a risk and resilience perspective, we expected that high experiences of ethnic discrimination at school would be associated with less self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism for minority youth in Germany (Hypothesis 1a), but also with less school integration (Hypothesis 1b). Consistent with research showing that higher parental (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Hoskins, 2014; Wills et al., 2004) and peer (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Shoshani et al., 2014; Stewart at al., 2008) support have beneficial effects on ethnic minority youth mental health and adjustment, we, moreover, expected minority youth to show high positive adjustment outcomes when receiving high parental (Hypothesis 2a) or peer support (Hypothesis 2b). Few studies have simultaneously tested parental and peer support as moderators for the association between PED and adjustment. Based on the risk and resilience perspective and some previous findings on the buffering effects of social support (Wang et al., 2015), it was hypothesized that

parental (Hypothesis 3a) and peer (Hypothesis 3b) support will buffer the negative effects of PED on minority youth self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school integration. Finally, we also explored if our hypothesized model differed among refugee youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent.

Figure 1

Summary of Expected Relations



2.2 Materials and Methods

Data and Participants

We used data from $N = 104$ ethnic minority students in Germany, including $n = 55$ refugee youth and $n = 49$ youth of immigrant descent. Data were collected in 2019 across various local contexts, including secondary schools (2), mosques (4), youth migration services (3), refugee shelters (1) and German language courses for refugees (3). Before starting data collection, the study received ethical approval from the ethics commission at Bielefeld University.

Secondary schools with high numbers of ethnic minority students (> 50%) along with mosques, youth migration services, refugee shelters and German language courses were contacted personally and via phone. Prior to the administration of the paper-and-pencil

questionnaire, informed consent from participants and their parents (for participants under the age of 18) was obtained. Participation was voluntary, not remunerated, anonymity was guaranteed, and the participants were able to choose the language in which they wanted to answer the survey (German, Arabic or Kurmanji).

The refugee status was based on the refugee definition presented in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951, p. 14). Consequently, adolescents who indicated in the questionnaire to have left their home country because of ethnic, religious and/or political persecution, discrimination, fear of violent conflicts and /or war were considered as refugees.

Refugee youth primarily stated Syria (n = 21), Turkey (n = 10) and Iraq (n = 7) as their countries of birth. Next to n = 45 youth of immigrant descent who specified to be born in Germany and to have at least one parent or grandparent who had immigrated to Germany (second and third generation), n = 4 indicated Turkey or Iran as their countries of birth[3]. Ages of the total sample ranged from 12 to 23 (M_{age} = 17.73, SD_{age} = 3.29) and 61% identified themselves as female[4].

Measures

Positive Adjustment

In this research, we assessed positive adjustment in terms of (a) four indicators of psychological well-being – namely, self-esteem, two aspects of self-efficacy (relating to goals and abilities, respectively) and optimism – and (b) school integration. All positive adjustment outcomes were measured with items taken from the Developmental Resources Questionnaire

[3] Even though four participants indicated to be born outside of Germany, the vast majority of our respective sub-sample were indeed second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent.

[4] Youth of immigrant descent and refugee youth subsamples had the following age and gender distributions: (1) Refugee youth (n = 55), M_{age} = 18.15 (SD_{age} = 3.75), 49% female; (2) Youth of immigrant descent (n = 49), M_{age} = 17.27 (SD_{age}= 2.64), 74% female.

for Children and Adolescents (FRKJ 8-16) by Lohaus and Nussbeck (2016). Participants responded to the items on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*all the time*).

The four indicators of psychological well-being were measured as follows. Self-esteem was assessed with three items: (1) "I can be proud of myself", (2) "I feel good when I think about myself", and (3) "I have many good feelings when I think about myself" ($\alpha = 0.71$). The two dimensions of self-efficacy were also assessed with a total of five items. The first dimension taps into how self-efficacious the ethnic minority participants felt in reaching their goals: (1) "When I set a goal, I see the positive", (2) "When I set my mind to something, I manage to do it", and (3) "When I really want to achieve something, I also succeed" ($\alpha = 0.75$). The second dimension captures self-efficacy in terms of abilities: (1) "With my skills I can achieve anything" and (2) "I can achieve a lot with my skills" (Spearman-Brown coefficient = 0.66). Optimism was assessed with a four-item scale, including items such as: (1) "I have a positive basic mood" and (2) "Even if I have problems, I see the positive" ($\alpha = 0.71$). Finally, school integration was measured with six items, such as: (1) "I feel comfortable at school", (2) "I get along well with my classmates" and (3) "I really like the climate at my school" ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Perceived Ethnic Discrimination at School

Perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) at school was assessed with five statements adapted from the Adolescent Discrimination Distress Index by Fisher, Wallace and Fenton (2000). First, the ethnic minority adolescents read a short introduction: "After each statement, tell us if you have experienced each of the following types of discrimination because of your race or ethnicity. Remember we are only interested in occasions when racial-ethnic discrimination was at least partly responsible for your experience." Afterwards they were presented five statements asking for a Yes/No answer, such as: (1) "You were discouraged from joining an advanced level class", (2) "You were wrongly disciplined or given after-school

detention", (3) "You were given a lower grade than you deserved". As in previous research, the overall score was calculated by counting the items which were answered with a Yes answer.

Social Support

To assess peer and parental support, we again used items from the Developmental Resources Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (FRKJ 8-16) by Lohaus and Nussbeck (2016); and ethnic minority participants responded to the items on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*all the time*). Peer and parental support were measured with six items each. The following are example items that were used to measure peer support: (1) "I have friends I can rely on", (2) "I also meet with friends after school", (3) "I feel good when I am with my friends" ($\alpha = 0.76$). For parental support, the youth answered inter alia the items: (1) "If I need support, my parents are there for me", (2) "If I am afraid of something, I can always approach my parents", (3) "My parents are good at comforting me" ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Control Variables

To estimate net effects of the main predictor variable, *age*, *gender* (1 = girls, 0 = boys) [5], *status* (1 = refugee youth, 0 = youth of immigrant descent), *school form* (1 = secondary education, 0 = post-secondary education) and *ethnic identification* were included as statistical controls in our models. As previous research (Alivernini et al., 2017, 2020; Dimitrova, 2016; Yeh et al., 2003) found significant links between our socio-demographic variables (age, gender, status and school form) and the well-being and school integration of ethnic minority youth, we included them as control variables in our study. Further, several studies (Abu-Rayya & Abu-Rayya, 2009; Fuligni et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2004) found a significant link between ethnic identification and indicators of well-being and school adjustment for adolescents, therefore, we

[5] While indicating their gender, participants could as well refer to the category "Other". As we decided that the amount of three participants was too small for forming a group, we recoded the three cases into missing values.

decided to include ethnic identification as a control variable. It was measured with the item "How strongly do you feel connected to your country of origin?" and for those who were born in Germany with the item "How strongly do you feel connected to the country of origin of your parents or grandparents?". The ethnic minority youth answered the question that applied to them on a scale from 1 (*not connected at all*) to 4 (*very strong connected*).

Analyses

To test our hypotheses, we employed a structural equation modeling (SEM) procedure using Mplus 8, version 1.6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2012-2018). In our model we controlled for status, age, gender, school-form, and ethnic identification. Concerning our additional analyses, multi-group analyses were performed with the aim of examining similarities and differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. Note that we do not have theoretical reasons to expect differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent concerning the associations; however, we wanted to acknowledge these two distinct subgroups in our sample by testing whether our associations of interest are similar across the two subgroups. Three fit indices were considered to evaluate the model fit: Comparative Fit Index (CFI > .90), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI > .90) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < .08) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

2.3 Results

Descriptive Results

Mean scores, standard deviations and ranges for our main study are presented in Table 1. Our participants reported a moderate number of experienced instances of PED at school (M = 1.88, SD = 1.48). Concerning their psychological well-being, the mean scores of minority youth self-esteem, self-efficacy and optimism were all close to '3' on their 4-point scale, indicating psychological well-being on a rather high level. Similarly, school integration showed

a high score of 3.01 (*SD* = 0.62). Finally, the mean scores of peer (*M* = 3.10, *SD* = 0.53) and parental support (*M* = 3. 25, *SD* = 0.77) were close to the positive end of their 4-point scale, suggesting rather favorable support of parents and peers for minority youth.

In addition, we report bivariate correlations between the main study variables in Table 2. Unexpectedly, we found a negative correlation between PED and parental support. Further, PED showed a negative correlation with school integration. Concerning our measures of positive adjustment, significant positive correlations were found between self-esteem and self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism and between self-efficacy and optimism. In addition, better school integration was accompanied by higher self-esteem and optimism. Whereas both types of social support were associated with better school integration, more peer support was also associated with higher self-esteem, while more parental support was also associated with higher optimism.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Our Main Study Variables (N = 104)

	M	*SD*
Self-esteem	2.80	0.63
Self-efficacy (goals)	2.89	0.66
Self-efficacy (abilities)	3.01	0.65
Optimism	2.93	0.58
School integration	3.01	0.62
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school	1.88	1.48
Peer support	3.10	0.53
Parental support	3.25	0.77

Note. All variables except for PED were measured on a scale from 1–4. PED represents a count variable, counting types of experienced ethnic discrimination at school from 0–5.

Table 2

Correlations Between Main Study Variables (N = 104)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Perceived ethnic discrimination at school	--							
2. Self-esteem	- 0.001	--						
3. Self-efficacy (goals)	0.173†	0.440***	--					
4. Self-efficacy (abilities)	0.062	0.428***	0.377***	--				
5. Optimism	- 0.103	0.440***	0.409***	0.384***	--			
6. School integration	- 0.292**	0.403***	0.023	0.187†	0.246*	--		
7. Peer support	- 0.008	0.274**	0.159	0.133	0.089	0.320***	--	
8. Parental support	- 0.339***	0.112	- 0.030	0.164†	0.274**	0.426***	0.232*	--

Note. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, †$p < .10$.

Main Analysis

Perceived Ethnic Discrimination at School & Positive Adjustment Outcomes

We tested our hypotheses about the role of PED at school for ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment (self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school integration) in a structural equation model. Model fit indices indicate that this model fits our data well (CFI = 0.960, TLI = 0.919, RMSEA = 0.041). The results of our model, while controlling for status, age, gender, school form and ethnic identity, are presented in Table 3; unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

We did not find significant relations between PED and minority youth's psychological well-being: PED at school was unrelated to self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism. Similarly, PED was unrelated to school integration. Thus, we have to reject both Hypothesis 1a and 1b: Our findings do not provide evidence that minority youth who experience higher numbers of different instances of PED at school will show lower levels of psychological well-being (in terms of their self-esteem, self-efficacy and optimism) or school integration.

Parental & Peer Support as Protective Factors

Regarding Hypothesis 2a and 2b, our model results show that both measures of social support were positively related to ethnic minority youth's psychological well-being and school integration. More precisely, ethnic minority youth who received more parental support, were also more optimistic ($B = 0.232$, $p = 0.009$), felt more self-efficacious in terms of their abilities ($B = 0.281$, $p = 0.003$) and more integrated in school ($B = 0.171$, $p = 0.046$). For peer support, significant relations with self-efficacy (goals) ($B = 0.299$, $p = 0.010$), self-efficacy (abilities) ($B = 0.276$, $p = 0.059$), self-esteem ($B = 0.477$, $p = 0.000$) and with school integration ($B = 0.266$, $p = 0.004$) were found. Overall, these findings support Hypothesis 2a and 2b, namely that ethnic minority youth who receive high amounts of parental and peer support will score higher on psychological well-being (in terms of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism) and school

integration. However, as parental support was not significantly related to self-esteem and self-efficacy (goals) and minority youth who received more peer support did not show to be significantly more optimistic, Hypothesis 2a and 2b were only partly confirmed.

Concerning Hypothesis 3a and 3b, there was a marginally significant two-way interaction effect between PED at school and peer support. To further examine this interaction, we conducted simple slope analysis (Aiken and West, 1991). We examined the effect of PED at school on minority youth optimism under two conditions: low (1 SD < M) and high (1 SD > M) peer support. As shown in Figure 2 ethnic minority youth were less optimistic when they perceived ethnic discrimination, but only when there was low peer support (B = -0.092, p = 0.080). No significant effects were found when the amount of peer support was high. While Hypothesis 3b was partly confirmed, Hypothesis 3a – assuming an interaction effect between PED and parental support – could not be confirmed.

Table 3

Results of the Structural Equation Model (N = 104)

	Self-esteem	Optimism	Self-efficacy (goals)	Self-efficacy (abilities)	School integration
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school	0.031	- 0.026	0.063	0.039	- 0.038
Peer support	0.477***	0.163	0.299**	0.276†	0.266**
Parental support	0.120	0.232**	0.053	0.281**	0.171*
2-way interaction terms					
PED at school X Peer support	0	0.130†	0	0	--
PED at school X Parental support	0	0	0	0	--
Controls					
Status (Refugee)	0.262*	0.237*	0.039	0.060	0.307**
Age	- 0.031	- 0.013	0.007	- 0.036	- 0.002
Gender (Female)	- 0.219†	0.147	- 0.065	- 0.251*	0.079

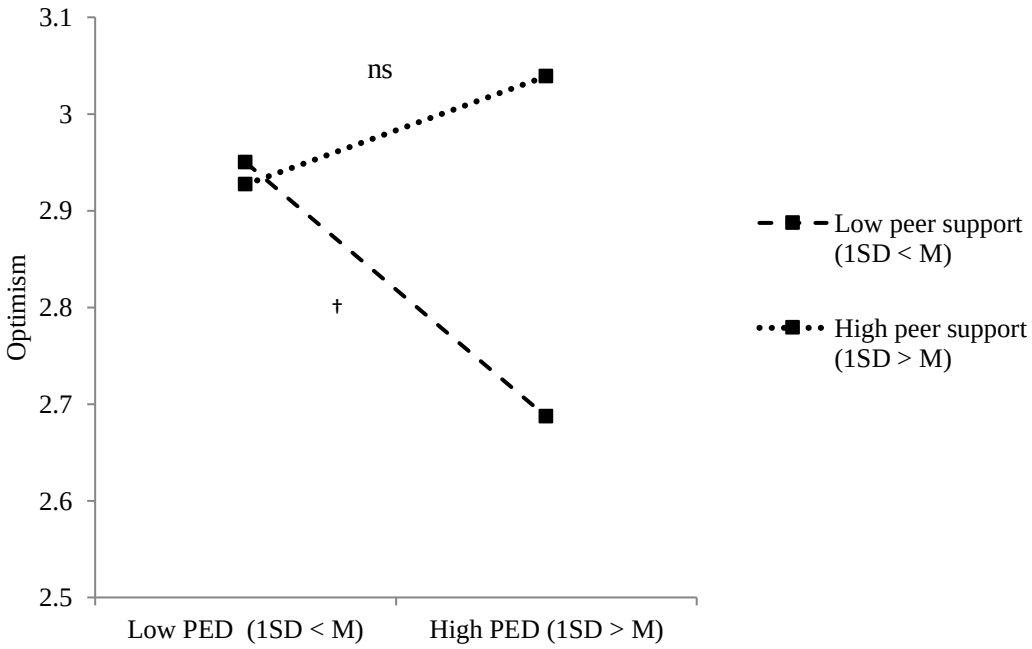
	Self-esteem	Optimism	Self-efficacy (goals)	Self-efficacy (abilities)	School integration
School-form (Secondary school)	- 0.066	- 0.078	0.098	- 0.093	- 0.120
Ethnic identification	- 0.180**	0.021	- 0.046	- 0.020	- 0.043
Variance					
R^2	0.300	0.192	0.089	0.207	0.218
Model fit					
RMSEA	0.041				
CFI	0.960				
TLI	0.919				

Note. Unstandardized coefficients presented.

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, $^{\dagger}p < .10$.

Figure 2

Effects of PED at School on Ethnic Minority Youth Optimism Dependent on the Level of Peer Support



Note. †p < .10, ns = not significant.

Control variables

With regard to our control variables, we found that refugee youth were more optimistic and reported more self-esteem and school integration than youth of immigrant descent. Moreover, compared to boys, girls revealed less self-efficacy concerning their abilities and less self-esteem. No significant differences in ethnic minority youth positive adjustment outcomes were found concerning age, ethnic identification and between those attending secondary and those attending post-secondary education.

Additional Analyses

Although, we did not have theoretical reasons to expect differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent concerning our model results, we still wanted to acknowledge these two subgroups in our sample and contribute to the closure of the aforesaid

research gap. Therefore, we decided to test whether the associations are similar across the subgroups. We tested for possible group differences in multi-group models that split our sample into the subgroups of refugee youth ($n = 55$) and youth of immigrant descent ($n = 49$). To ensure sufficient statistical power, we ran four separate multi-group models for self-esteem, optimism, the two self-efficacy measures (goals, abilities) and for school integration as independent variables respectively. The results of our multi-group models, while controlling for age, gender, school form and ethnic identity, are presented in Table 4.

Concerning the direct effect of PED at school on ethnic minority youth's psychological well-being and school integration, results indicated a significant positive effect of PED on refugee youth's self-efficacy (aims) ($B = 0.124$, $p = 0.081$) and on refugee youth's self-esteem ($B = 0.210$, $p = 0.000$) while for youth of immigrant descent no significant direct effects were found. Taking a closer look at our social support measures, several differences between refugee and youth of immigrant descent were revealed: While for refugee youth no significant direct effects on optimism were found, for youth of immigrant descent a significant positive effect of parental support on optimism was revealed ($B = 0.369$, $p = 0.002$). Concerning our measures of self-efficacy, results indicated significant main effects for both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. Firstly, significant positive main effects of parental ($B = 0.294$, $p = 0.017$) and peer support ($B = 0.410$, $p = 0.040$) on refugee youth's self-efficacy (abilities) were revealed. Secondly, peer support was positively related to self-efficacy (goals) for youth of immigrant descent ($B = 0.364$, $p = 0.020$) and a positive main effect of parental support on youth of immigrant descents' self-efficacy (abilities) ($B = 0.229$, $p = 0.059$) was revealed. Furthermore, our results presented significant positive effects of peer support on refugee youth ($B = 0.760$, $p = 0.000$) and youth of immigrant descents' ($B = 0.312$, $p = 0.015$) self-esteem. Lastly, we found positive main effects of peer support on refugee youth's ($B = 0.223$, $p = 0.048$) and youth of immigrant descents' ($B = 0.251$, $p = 0.060$) school integration. Additionally,

parental support was positively related to school integration for refugee youth (B = 0.264, p = 0.023).

Taking a closer look at the relations between PED, social support and our positive adjustment measures, model results for refugee youth regarding optimism indicated both a significant two-way interaction effect between PED and peer support and between PED and parental support. Figure 3 shows that refugee youth were less optimistic when they perceived ethnic discrimination, but only when they received low peer support (B = -0.130, p = 0.037). Taking a closer look at the effect of PED on refugee youth optimism under low (1 SD < M) and high (1 SD > M) parental support, no significant effects were revealed (Figure 4). For youth of immigrant descent, significant two-way interaction effects between PED and parental support regarding optimism and self-esteem were revealed. Figure 5 shows the results of the simple slope analysis for youth of immigrant descents' optimism: Youth of immigrant descent were more optimistic when they perceived ethnic discrimination, but only when there was high parental support (B = 0.128, p = 0.043). As indicated in Figure 6, youth of immigrant descents' self-esteem was negatively affected by PED when the amount of parental support was low (B = - 0.180, p = 0.009).

Table 4

Multi-group Models Comparing Refugee Youth (n = 55) and Youth of Immigrant Descent (n = 49)

	Model 1 Self-esteem	Model 2 Optimism	Model 3 Self-efficacy (goals)	Model 3 Self-efficacy (abilities)	Model 4 School integration
Refugee youth (*n* = 55)	*B*	*B*	*B*	*B*	*B*
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school	0.210***	- 0.013	0.124†	0.103	0.017
Peer support	0.760***	0.034	0.234	0.410*	0.223*
Parental support	- 0.050	0.089	0.079	0.294*	0.264*
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school X Peer support	0	0.242*	0	0	0
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school X Parental support	0	- 0.117*	0	0	0
Youth of immigrant descent (*n* = 49)					
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school	- 0.060	0.006	0.012	0.032	- 0.037
Peer support	0.312*	0.096	0.364*	0.048	0.251†
Parental support	0.185	0.369*	0.026	0.229†	0.055
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school X Peer support	0	0	0	0	0

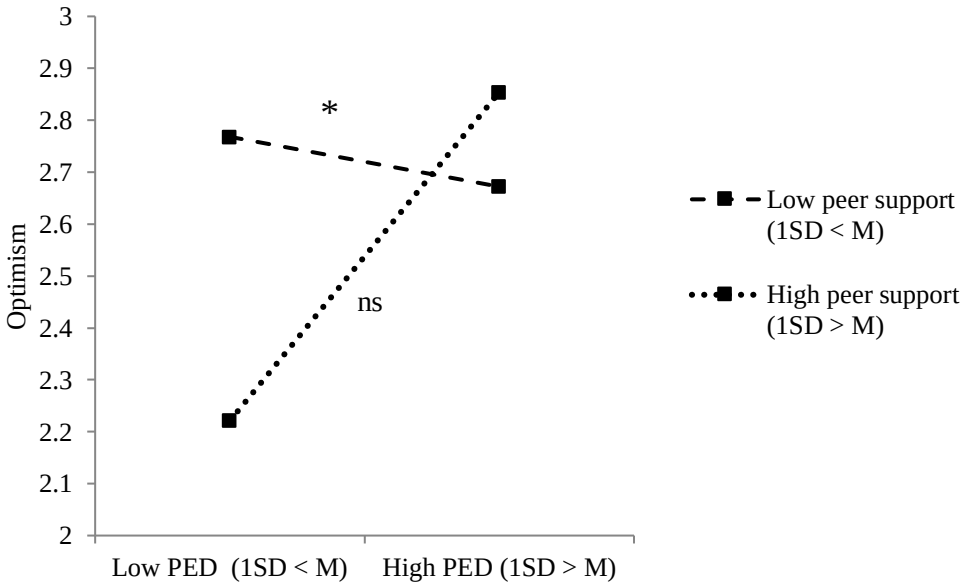
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3		Model 4
	Self-esteem	Optimism	Self-efficacy (goals)	Self-efficacy (abilities)	School integration
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school X Parental support	0.165*	0.169*	0	0	0

Note. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. For simplicity, control variables are not shown; included as controls in the model are age, gender, school form and ethnic identification.

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, $^{\dagger}p < .10$.

Figure 3

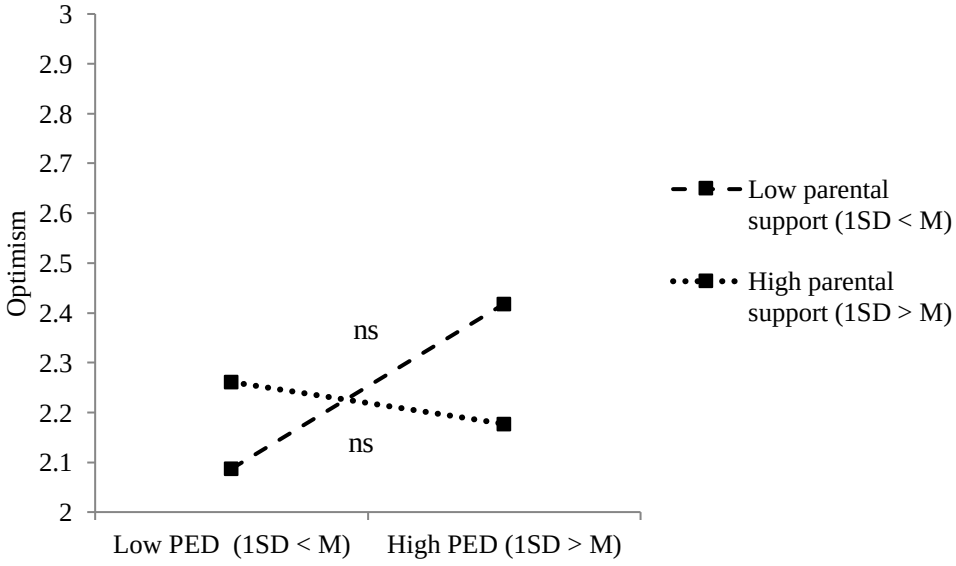
Effects of PED on Refugee Youth's Optimism Dependent on the Level of Peer Support



Note. * $p < 0.05$, ns = not significant.

Figure 4

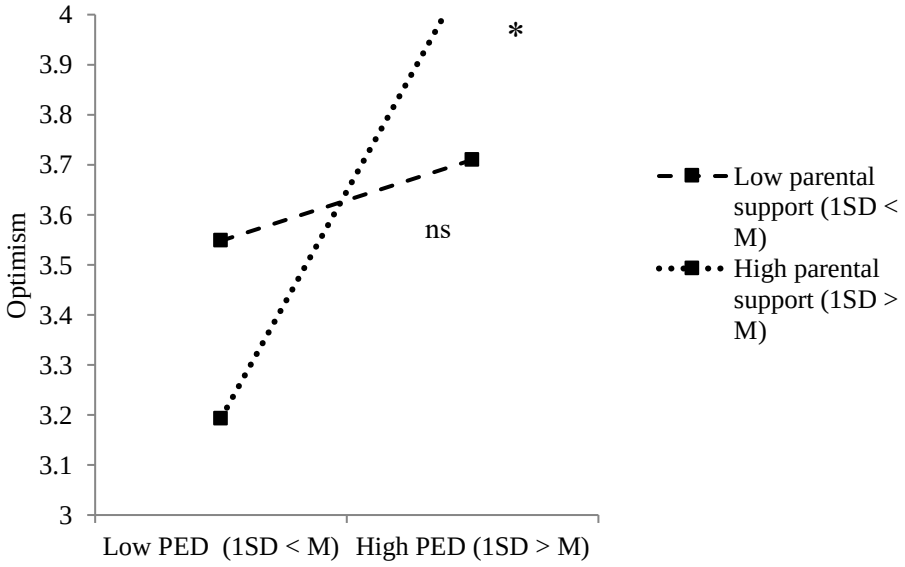
Effects of PED on Refugee Youth's Optimism Dependent on the Level of Parental Support



Note. ns = not significant.

Figure 5

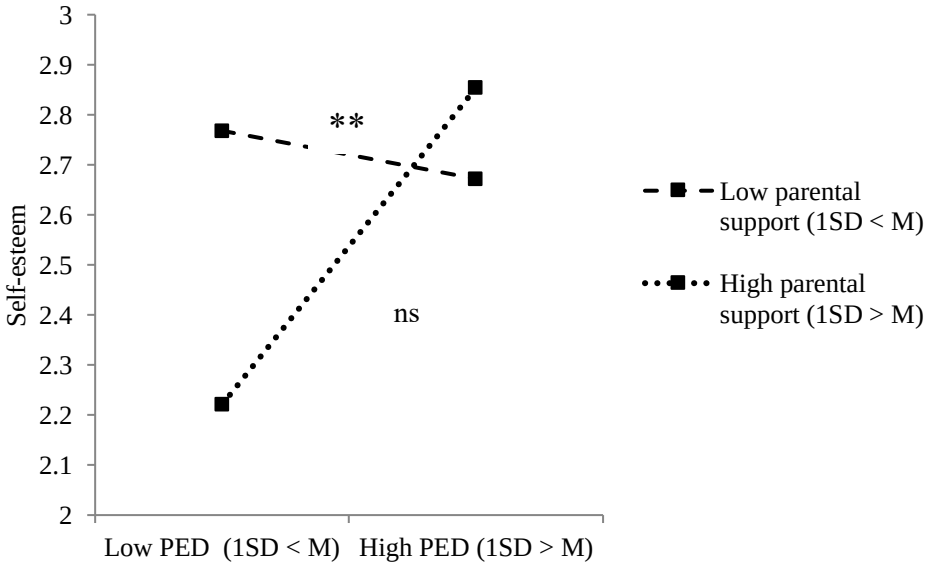
Effects of PED on Youth of Immigrant Descents' Optimism Dependent on the Level of Parental Support



Note. *p < .05, ns = not significant.

Figure 6

Effects of PED on Youth of Immigrant Descents' Self-esteem Dependent on the Level of Parental Support



Note. ** p < .01, ns = not significant.

2.4 Discussion

There is growing research literature showing that greater PED is related to poorer adjustment for ethnic minority youth (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Fisher et al., 2000; Priest et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2003). However much less is known about potential protective factors that can buffer the detrimental effects of PED on minority youth's positive adjustment. The present study adds to this literature by simultaneously examining parental and peer support as buffering factors concerning the relation between PED at school and positive adjustment. In addition, we explored possible differences between refugee youth and second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent regarding the risk and protective roles of PED and social support for their adjustment.

Contrary to some previous research and our established hypotheses, we did not find that ethnic minority youth show lower levels of positive adjustment in the form of lower self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism or school-integration when experiencing higher numbers of different instances of PED at school. A possible explanation for this non-finding could be minority youth ethnic identification. Next to social support, ethnic identification is known to be another significant protective factor in the face of PED (Atari & Han, 2018; Kunyu et al., 2021). Referring to the rejection-identification model by Branscombe and colleagues (1999), it may be that most of the minority youth highly identified with their ethnic group after they have experienced discrimination against their ethnic group, which protected them from the negative effects of PED. Future research is needed to examine our models while also including ethnic identification as another protective factor.

Moreover, contrary to our expectation, we found in our additional analyses that refugee youth who experienced more instances of ethnic discrimination also reported higher self-esteem and more self-efficacy in achieving their goals. A possible explanation could be psychological reactance (Wareham, 2011). As stated in Brehm's reactance theory (1966), psychological

reactance describes a motivational state caused by a perceived threat to an individual's freedom. While Wareham and colleagues (2011) have found experiences of discriminatory events to cause individuals to experience a reactive state, in our study refugee youth's higher self-esteem and self-efficacy could be effects of their psychological reactance caused by high PED. Additional research is needed to examine more in detail the psychological mechanisms, underlying and stating the found associations.

Furthermore, our study results suggest that both parental and peer support are beneficial for ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment. As expected, and found in previous research (e.g., Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Sun et al., 2016), minority youth who experienced more parental or peer support, also reported higher self-esteem as well as greater self-efficacy, optimism and school integration. Moreover, similar overall patterns were found across refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. Interestingly, parental support was positively associated with school integration only for refugee youth and positively associated with optimism only for youth of immigrant descent. This shows that parental support can affect refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in different ways, thus highlighting the importance of distinguishing between the two groups. Future research should study the mechanisms that underlie and can explain these different associations across the two groups.

With regard to parental and peer support as protective factors in the face of PED, we found that ethnic minority youth who experienced low peer support were less optimistic when experiencing PED. In contrast, optimism was unrelated to experiences of PED when peer support was high. Here our results examining associations across refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent suggest that this buffering effect of peer support is mainly driven by refugee youth. For youth of immigrant descent, we found that high parental support protected against negative effects of PED on self-esteem, while it may even have contributed to an overcompensation for optimism, which was not affected by PED in the first place. We propose

that parental racial socialization may explain the sustained self-esteem and optimism of youth of immigrant descent, when experiencing PED.

Racial socialization by parents includes teaching their children about race and ethnicity, enhancing their sense of ethnic identity, and preparing them for experiences of ethnic discrimination (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). Previous research has shown that parental racial socialization can be associated with positive outcomes, for instance, in Black youth experiencing racial stress (Anderson et al., 2019). As many parents of youth of immigrant descent have already spent much time in Germany and have gone through processes of acculturation and possibly also experiences of ethnic discrimination themselves, they may be better equipped to racially socialize and empower their children than parents of newly immigrated refugee youth. This in turn may explain why youth of immigrant descent in our study were able to sustain their self-esteem and optimism in the face of PED when parental support was high. It would be interesting for further studies to examine parental support in the form of racial socialization in relation to PED and youth adjustment.

Another interesting avenue for future research would be to examine how parents of refugee youth can be empowered to provide the kind of support that their children need in the face of PED. Considering that parents of refugee youth, just like their children, are going through the process of acculturation and must cope with salient stressors arising from the acculturation process, refugee youth possibly seek more support from their peers to not put additional burden on their parents. For that reason, receiving support from external sources – such as from the school - in the process of acculturation is important for parents and needs to be further enhanced. While parents would be relieved, refugee youth would dare again to ask their parents for support and share their experiences of discrimination with them.

Limitations & Future Research

The present study should be considered in the light of some limitations and qualifications. First, we used cross-sectional data and therefore could not provide evidence for causality. We analyzed PED and parental and peer support as predictors of ethnic minority youth positive adjustment, but there could be reciprocal influences. However, there are a handful of longitudinal studies, suggesting PED to have deleterious effects on youth adjustment (Galliher et al., 2011; Greene et al., 2006). Future studies should use longitudinal designs to replicate our findings. Additionally, future longitudinal studies are needed to test directional, longitudinal moderation enabling to understand to what extent family and peer processes offer protection against discrimination over time.

As a second limitation, we acknowledge that the present study used measures for PED that only captured the number of different instances of PED, but not their frequency and intensity. It could be the case that minority youth experienced the same instance of PED at school multiple times and in different intensities. Future studies should use measurement instruments for PED, which also enable to make statements about the amount and intensity of PED and not only about the experienced number of instances of PED. Furthermore, our social support measures were not specifically matched to the needs that might be elicited by PED. Future studies should therefore go beyond questions that ask about general peer or parental support to assess specific support needs when dealing with PED. As discussed earlier, specific support needs may, for instance, be linked to parental racial socialization practices (Anderson et al., 2019). As Juang et al. (2016) recommended, one way forward could be, for instance, to study how parents and peers react when they are told about discrimination experiences.

Implications

The results of our study suggest several practical implications. As both parental and peer support were associated with ethnic minority youth positive adjustment and especially peer

support was found to be a significant protective factor for refugee youth, implementing programs at schools to promote peer and parental support is of high importance.

Taking into account that positive intergroup contact has been found to reduce prejudices against outgroup members (Christ et al., 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and considering the positive effects of interethnic friendships for minority youth's adjustment (Schachner et al., 2015), supporting the interaction and experiences with peers of other racial groups represents a favorable recommendation for action in this context. Therefore, the early creation of opportunities for positive contact experiences, especially between refugee youth and non-refugee youth, is of central relevance. By giving the opportunity to break down prejudices and promoting the development of peer networks, joint sports activities and programs where ethnic minority youth and youth from the majority society form a tandem have high potential to enhance ethnic minority youth positive adjustment (Alhaddad et al., 2021). Having the aim to support schools in helping ethnic minority youth to develop a positive ethnic identity and promoting their social integration by forming such tandems, programs as developed by Zander and collegues (2019) present suitable interventions for schools. In tandems, youth learn more about their own and others' values and emotions and reflect on friendship and the changeability of established normed. It becomes clear that joint activities are paramount and need to be promoted by schools within and outside the classroom.

Referring to the significant role of parental support for ethnic minority youth's positive adjustment, a good cooperation between schools, teacher and parents is essential. Previous research has shown that such successful cooperation can have positive effects on youth's development, academic outcomes and future opportunities (Kohl et al., 2015). In this context it needs to be considered that for parents of refugee youth, who are generally very interested in their children's school career and positive development, insufficient language skills constitute a major barrier (Cholewa et al., 2014). Consequently, schools would do well in providing

interpreters, enabling parents to take part in information sessions and consultations. Furthermore, the establishment of meeting places, where parents can have a mutual exchange, would make it possible for parents to create new contacts, to exchange about how to support their children best and at the same time also manage their own acculturation process (Alhaddad et al., 2021). Referring to the finding that refugee youth often are able to integrate more quickly than their parents and thus become cultural brokers for their parents (Jones & Tricket, 2005), the provision of support for parents regarding their own acculturation process would be beneficial for refugee youth. While their parents would be relieved, refugee youth would no longer have the feeling to burden their parents and would dare to open up and seek parental support regarding their discrimination experiences. Thus, they could experience parental support as an important buffer for their discrimination experiences. It becomes clear that the strengthening of cooperations between schools and social community agencies is of central importance.

2.5 Conclusion

Ethnic minority youth spend a considerable part of their waking hours at school while interacting with peers and teachers. The relations between PED, parental and peer support and positive adjustment, as well as research on possible similarities and differences amongst refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent regarding these associations received little attention so far. The results of our study show that PED may hurt less for some youth, depending on their level of support by parents and peers. Further, our study provides information on the differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent regarding their experiences of PED and needs for support. Future research should examine the mechanisms that underlie and can explain these different experiences and associations across the two groups. Moreover, schools and teachers would do well to implement programs that strengthen peer networks and the ability

of parents to support their children, while also addressing the issue of ethnic discrimination at school.

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2.7 Supplementary Material

Table S1

Means and Standard Deviations of our Main Study Variables for Refugee Youth (n = 55) and Youth of Immigrant Descent (n = 49)

	Refugee youth		Youth of immigrant descent	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Self-esteem	2.90	0.66	2.70	0.58
Self-efficacy (goals)	2.86	0.65	2.92	0.67
Self-efficacy (abilities)	3.01	0.66	3.01	0.63
Optimism	3.00	0.52	2.86	0.64
School integration	3.18	0.47	2.82	0.64
Perceived ethnic discrimination at school	1.53	1.29	2.29	1.60
Peer support	3.04	0.49	3.17	0.56
Parental support	3.35	0.70	3.14	0.84

Note. All variables except for PED were measured on a scale from 1–4. PED represents a count variable, counting types of experienced ethnic discrimination at school from 0–5.

3 Study 2: "They are my safe haven": The Importance of Personal and Social Resources for Refugee Youth and Youth of Immigrant Descent Mastering Acculturative Challenges and Developmental Tasks

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Abstract

Immigrant-origin youth in Germany are faced with various acculturative challenges, including discrimination, language, and sociocultural hassles. Constituting additional stress to normative developmental tasks in adolescence, immigrant-origin youth are in need of supportive resources fostering their well-being. Drawing on the risk and resilience framework and applying a strength-based perspective, the current study investigated refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' perspectives on their main challenges, tasks, and resources in Germany. The present study paid special attention to the interplay of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks in relation to the youth's resources and their psychological well-being. Semi-structured interviews with six refugee youth and five second-generation youth of immigrant descent including nine boys and two girls between the ages of 14 – 16 (M_{age} = 15.45, SD_{age} = 0.69) were analyzed. Using thematic analysis, data was structured in four themes: 1) acculturative challenges, 2) developmental tasks, 3) personal resources, and 4) social resources. Results highlight the importance of personal (incl., individual characteristics, identity, religion) and social (incl., supportive friends, family, teachers) resources to master the range of acculturative challenges (incl., language barriers, perceived ethnic and religious discrimination, cultural differences) and developmental tasks (incl., negotiation of autonomy, academic future planning). In addition, results indicate the importance of social resources for refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent when dealing with discriminatory experiences. Our findings offer practical implications for schools in terms of interventions focusing on both the strengthening of personal and social resources, and the reduction of challenges to promote immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being.

Keywords: refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent, acculturative challenges, developmental tasks, resources

3.1 Introduction

Due to global wars and turmoil, Germany has received almost 2.5 million refugees by mid 2023, mostly from Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Reports by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (2023) show that in 2023, 25% of asylum seekers were children and adolescents under the age of 16. These children and adolescents are part of a society where nearly one-third of the population comprises immigrants or their direct descendants. While both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent[1] are faced with normative developmental tasks, the same as their nonimmigrant-origin peers, many of them face additional acculturative challenges in their daily lives, such as language hassles, discrimination, and sociocultural challenges (Titzmann et al., 2011). However, these acculturative challenges and developmental tasks can not only have distinct influences on their well-being but can also be intertwined and interact.

Studies focusing on the adjustment and well-being of immigrant-origin youth show that the youth perform better on several health-, academic- and behavioral-related outcomes than their nonimmigrant-origin peers and show remarkably stable mental health (Berry et al., 2006; Dimitrova et al., 2016). Named the immigrant paradox, this phenomenon raises the question of resources helping refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent to master their acculturative challenges and normative developmental tasks while fostering their psychological well-being.

Studying this question, previous work on risk and protective factors (Luthar, 2000; Masten, 2015) and on the links between acculturative challenges, developmental tasks and well-being (i.e., the integrative risk and resilience model for immigrant-origin children and youth's adaptation, Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018) offers a useful framework. Beyond considering

[1] The Federal Government Expert Commission (2021) has recommended to no longer use the term "migration background" to aggregate immigrants of second and later generations, but rather "immigrants and their direct descendants". Thus, we use the term "youth of immigrant descent" to describe youth who are descents of immigrants – as distinct from "refugee youth" who have recently migrated to and sought refuge (in Germany).

acculturative challenges and developmental tasks as potential risk factors, this perspective also considers resources that can promote and protect adjustment and psychological well-being.

While studies providing evidence in favor of the immigrant paradox are growing (see Dimitrova et al. for a meta-analysis, 2016), studies focusing on investigating possible explanations for this phenomenon are still rare, especially studies focusing on the role of resources. In addition, qualitative studies, driven by and focusing on what is important for immigrant-origin youth by encompassing refugee youth (such as e.g., Alhaddad et al., 2011) and youth of immigrant descent are of significant need. Using semi-structured interviews, we aim to fill this research gap by examining the lived experiences of refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Germany regarding their acculturative challenges, developmental tasks, and resources to master them and to foster their psychological well-being.

Acculturative Challenges and Developmental Tasks

Like all youth, refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent face normative developmental tasks (Masten et al., 2006), but they are also confronted with additional acculturative challenges stemming from the need to adapt to the dynamics of at least two cultures (Phinney et al., 2001). These acculturation-related hassles represent additional stress to the age-related developmental tasks and can result in negative adjustment and psychological well-being outcomes, including higher psychological distress and depressive symptoms (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Goforth et al., 2015). This shows the need for personal and social resources, supporting the youth with their developmental tasks and acculturative challenges and enabling positive adjustment and well-being outcomes (e.g., Katsiaficas et al., 2016; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017).

Next to biological changes, adolescents undergo changes in the social and psychological functioning (Brown & Klute, 2006; McElhaney et al., 2009). Simpson (2001) collated a list of developmental tasks during adolescence, including (1) renegotiating relationships with parents,

(2) identifying meaningful moral standards, values and belief systems, (3) meeting the demands of increasingly mature roles and responsibilities, (4) establishing key aspects of identity, (5) forming friendships that are mutually close and supportive, (6) adjusting to sexually maturing bodies and feelings, (7) developing and apply abstract thinking and perspective taking skills, and (8) developing and apply socio-emotional skills. These developmental tasks reflect three life domains crucial for adolescents during this developmental period, namely family, peers, and school (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Simpson, 2001).

While dealing with developmental tasks, refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent also face challenges related to the process of acculturation. These challenges are specific to the experience of acculturation, presenting a direct consequence of the demand to deal with two cultural groups in direct contact (Berry, 1997). Previous literature mainly referred to three acculturation-related challenges: language hassles, discrimination hassles, and family hassles (Titzmann et al., 2011). According to Titzmann and colleagues (2011), language hassles include problems resulting from a lower level of language proficiency in the national language and mostly affect the youth's communication with peers and at school. A study among first-, second- and third-generation youth of immigrant descent in Germany showed that youth who experienced greater language hassles showed higher psychological distress, a lower sense of perceived competence and lastly poorer academic adjustment (Kunyu et al., 2021). In accordance, a study among refugee youth in Canada identified linguistic barriers as a key challenge in pursuing educational goals (Shakya et al., 2012). In addition, Meyer and colleagues (2023) found that Arabic-speaking refugee youth showed significantly fewer depressive symptoms when having higher German language skills. Discrimination hassles comprise negative experiences, such as verbal harassment or rejection by peers because of one's real or assumed membership in a specific group. In the context of acculturation, discrimination often takes place on the grounds of youth's immigrant status, ethnicity and/or religion (Federal Anti-

Discrimination Agency, 2022). Perceived discrimination is associated with several negative psychological and physical outcomes for immigrant-origin youth (e.g., Benner et al., 2018). When referring to family hassles, parental objections to the cultural adaptations of their children constitute a crucial factor. While refugee youth have been found to adjust faster than their parents (Birman & Trickett, 2001), this dissonant pace of acculturation between parents and their children (named as *acculturative gap*), has been identified as a significant source of stress for immigrant-origin adolescents (Fuligni & Tsai, 2015; Telzer, 2011). For refugee youth the separation from family members, difficult procedures of family reunification and socio-economic strains of the family can constitute additional hassles (Anderson, 2001; Müller et al., 2019). It becomes clear that refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent are faced with a variety of acculturative challenges next to their developmental tasks.

The Interplay of Acculturative Challenges and Developmental Tasks

However, acculturative challenges and developmental tasks not only have distinct influence on refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' psychological well-being and adjustment but can also be intertwined and interact (Jugert & Titzmann, 2020; Titzmann & Lee, 2018). Suárez-Orozco and colleagues stated that in certain instances, the mastering of acculturative challenges may occur before the acquisition of developmental tasks (2018). For example, a longitudinal study in the US with recently arrived young adolescents showed that mastering the acculturative challenge of obtaining proficiency in English was essential for the developmental task of academic performance (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). In addition, a study among immigrant youth in Greece found that being involved in the Greek culture while nourishing one's heritage culture (as an acculturative challenge) predicted changes in the youth's self-efficacy, whose development presents a key developmental task (Reitz et al., 2014). Having a closer look at the family context and relationships with parents, Titzmann and colleagues (2015) found that ethnic minority youth who take on the role of family language

brokers also showed more mature communication with their parents than what would be normatively expected at their developmental level of autonomy. While showing the preceding role of acculturative challenges, these results also suggest that the fulfilment of acculturative tasks represents an important resource for refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' developmental tasks.

Acculturation-related challenges may also pose a risk factor to attain normative developmental tasks. Referring to the family context and relationships with parents, the acculturation gap between parents and their children can constitute a challenge and risk factor for ethnic minority youth. While being better able to handle challenges in the new society than their parents, this acculturation dissonance can cause family conflicts and alienation, which can, in turn, deteriorate immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being (Frazer et al., 2016; Titzmann & Sonnenberg, 2016).

Another core developmental task during adolescence is forming a stable identity (Erikson, 1968). In contrast to their nonimmigrant-origin peers, immigrant-origin youth are often tasked with the development of an ethnic identity in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). While experiencing ethnic discrimination can result in an increased level of ethnic identity crisis and ethnic identity exploration (Adubofour et al., 2011), the perception that something about the self is rejected or disliked by others can also lead to a loss of self-esteem and negative developmental outcomes (Denise, 2012; Thijs et al., 2018). Further, the navigation between two cultures and the mismatch between the youth's ethnic self-identification and other people's assumption can impede the process of ethnic identity formation and result in lower adjustment (Fleischmann et al., 2019; Nishina et al., 2018).

In addition to the developing a stable identity, forming friendships presents a central developmental task during adolescence. For immigrant-origin youth, navigating between cross-

ethnic and same-ethnic friendships can be related to varied acculturative and developmental outcomes. For example, same-ethnic friendships have been found to promote immigrant-origin youth's ethnic identity development and cross-ethnic friendships to support immigrant-origin youth in their acculturation process (Benner & Wang, 2016). Contrary, cross-ethnic friendships can also exacerbate the negative effects of perceived ethnic discrimination on immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being (Brenick et al., 2018). However, the formation of cross-ethnic and same-ethnic friendships also depends on youth's identification with their heritage and host culture, and from the peer norms (positive or negative) about cross-ethnic friendships (Jugert et al., 2013).

It becomes clear that immigrant-origin youth's additional acculturative tasks can constitute both a resource for subsequent developmental tasks, but also a risk factor for attaining normative developmental tasks and experiencing additional stress and negative adjustment outcomes. To our knowledge, research has yet to examine the interplay of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks among immigrant-origin youth in Germany while encompassing the perspectives of refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent.

The Importance of Personal and Social Resources for Mastering Acculturative Challenges, Developmental Tasks and Fostering Well-being

Despite the multiple challenges and tasks they are faced with, immigrant-origin youth often show remarkable positive adjustment and well-being, including better health-, academic- and behavioral-related outcomes compared to their nonimmigrant-origin peers (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Dimitrova et al., 2016). While acculturative challenges and developmental tasks can constitute risk factors, resources can act as important promotive and protective factors for refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' psychological well-being. Resources can stem from factors situated within the youth (personal resources) as well as from contexts where

their life is embedded (social resources) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

At the personal level, studies showed that for immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being and adjustment, a strong belief in their self-efficacy and locus of control is especially important. For example, a study among first-generation immigrant youth and second-generation youth of immigrant descent in Greece indicated that youth who believed stronger in their capability to manage demands and challenges showed better psychological well-being and academic achievement (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012). Next to high self-efficacy and locus of control, multiple studies among immigrant-origin youth (e.g., Costigan et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2018) found a stable ethnic identity to predict better psychological well-being and adjustment, such as higher feelings of self-esteem and more positive academic attitudes. While fostering a sense of purpose and a feeling of belonging to one's ethnic group (Yip & Fuligni, 2002), strong feelings of ethnic identity can also serve as a protective factor in the context of a specific risk. A meta-analysis by Yip and colleagues (2019) showed the protective role of ethnic identity for immigrant-origin youth's adjustment in the face of perceived discrimination.

In addition to individual characteristics and ethnic identity, youth's proximal contexts (e.g., family, peers and school) may serve as important social resources. While several studies showed that youth are better able to cope with difficult circumstances in the presence of social support, social support is also emphasized as a facilitator for the positive adjustment and well-being of immigrant-origin youth (Izzo et al., 2014; Wenzing et al, 2021). Both, family and peer support have been found to benefit immigrant-origin youth's psychological well-being and adjustment while also acting as protective factors against perceived discrimination (e.g., Sun et al., 2016; Wenzing et al., 2021). For example, a study among refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Germany showed the beneficial roles of family and peer support for immigrant-origin youth's positive adjustment (Wenzing et al., 2021). Peer support may

especially act for refugee youth as an important resource (see Barbaresos et al., 2023 for a review), as their parents often cannot support them because of mental strains and stress arising from their own acculturation process. Next to the supportive roles of family and peers, religious communities can also provide opportunities for social support, as shown by Abo-Zena and Barry (2013). Schools constitute another key social context for immigrant-origin youth, contributing to both their development and acculturation (Schachner et al., 2018). In the school context, caring relationships with teachers have been found to play a significant role in immigrant-origin youth's adjustment (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). Teachers who understand the needs of their immigrant-origin students support them in their acculturative tasks while simultaneously promoting their psychological well-being and positive adjustment (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

The Present Study

Based on previous work on risk and protective factors (Luthar, 2000; Masten, 2015) and Suárez-Orozco and colleagues' integrative risk and resilience model (2018), this study aims to explore the lived experiences of refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Germany in regard of their acculturative challenges, developmental tasks, and resources. Applying a strength-based perspective, we focused on challenges associated with acculturative and developmental tasks as risk factors and examined youth's personal and social resources as promotive and protective factors for their psychological well-being. Contrary to previous studies (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Güngor et al., 2017), which mostly focused on specific challenges and resources and their relation to refugee youth's and/or youth of immigrant descents' adjustment and well-being, this qualitative study follows a more open approach being driven by and focusing on what is important for the youth themselves. In addition, few studies examined the interplay of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks while

simultaneously focusing on both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. In our study, we were guided by the following research questions:

(1) What acculturative challenges and developmental tasks do refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Germany face, and how are they intertwined?

(2) What resources do they have to master these challenges and tasks and to foster their psychological well-being?

3.2 Methods

Participants

Eleven immigrant-origin youth aged 14 – 16 (M_{age} = 15.45, SD_{age} = 0.69) took part in the study, including nine boys and two girls. Six of the students indicated having a refugee experience. At the same time, the other five identified themselves as second-generation youth of immigrant descent having at least one foreign-born parent and being born within Germany. The adolescents were of various cultural backgrounds: German (n = 3), Syrian (n = 3), Afghan (n = 2), Arabic-Syrian (n = 1), Nigerian (n = 1), and German-Polish-French (n = 1). Table 1 gives an overview of the socio-demographic details of each participant, including their country of birth, country of origin of the family, and their cultural and religious self-identification. Participants were recruited as part of a project on belonging and identity among immigrant-origin youth and nonimmigrant-origin youth in Germany. More precisely, criteria for selection included: (a) attending the 9th grade at school and (b) having a refugee experience and/or at least one foreign-born parent while being born outside or within Germany.

Recruitment took place in two secondary schools in Halle, Germany. Both schools are culturally diverse, with a proportion of at least 70% of immigrant-origin youth. After we obtained approval from the ethics committee of the Martin-Luther-University of Halle-Wittenberg and the State Board of Education of Saxony-Anhalt, we started recruiting adolescents. First, we contacted the headmasters of the schools and received permission to

recruit students. After arranging a suitable time slot with the class teachers, we introduced our study to the 9th classes at both schools and handed out an information and consent letter for the adolescents and their parents, explaining the research aim and containing the contact details of the two main investigators. To reduce the potential anxiety and hesitation of the adolescents, we emphasized that they could decide what topics they would like to discuss during the interview and that they could always end the interview without any consequences. Interested students (n = 6) contacted the two main investigators via email, scheduled an interview appointment, and were reminded to bring the informed consent sheet signed by their parents. Before starting the interview, all adolescents gave written informed consent and agreed to an audio recording of the interview. In addition, we used snowball sampling (Robinson, 2014), in which initial interviewees were asked to recruit further participants (n = 5). Interviews were conducted during free periods or after the school's end in quiet rooms provided by the schools. Data collection started in September 2021 and ended in May 2022. Adolescents received 10 Euros for their participation.

Table 1

Demographic Overview of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Country of origin of parents	Experience of flight	Cultural/Religious self-identification*	Cards before interview	Cards after interview	Position on number line**
Anas	male	16	Syria	Mother: Syria Father: Syria	Yes	Arabic-Syrian/Muslim	Family, Friends, Religion	Family, Friends, Religion	7
Djamal	male	16	Syria	Mother: Syria Father: Syria	Yes	Syrian/Muslim	Family, Friends, School	Family, Friends, School	3,5
Faris	male	16	Syria	Mother: Syria Father: Syria	Yes	Syrian/Druze	Family, School, Friends	Family, School, Friends	3,5
Zara	female	16	Germany	Mother: Nigeria Father: Nigeria	No	Nigerian/non-religious	Family, Friends, well-being	Family, Friends, Religion	5
Wasim	male	15	Afghanistan	Mother: Afghanistan Father: Afghanistan	Yes	Afghan/Muslim	Religion, Family, Friends	NA	5
Tobias	male	16	Germany	Mother: Thailand Father: Germany	No	German/non-religious	Equality, being free and independent, Friends	Equality, being free and independent, Friends, Family	3,5
Julius	male	15	Germany	Mother: France Father: Poland	No	German-Polish-French/non-religious	Family, Well-being, Friends	Family, Health, Friends	3,5
Asijah	female	15	Iran	Mother: Iran Father: Afghanistan	Yes	Afghan/Muslim	Family, Friends, School	Health, being sportive, being part of a group	1
Andrej	male	14	Germany	Mother: Germany Father: Nigeria	No	German/non-religious	Family, Friends, Health	Equality, Friends, Family	4
Nikolas	male	15	Germany	Mother: Germany Father: Africa	No	German/non-religious	Family, Friends, School	Health, Family, Home	4
Hakim	male	16	Syria	Mother: Syria Father: Syria	Yes	Syrian/Muslim	Family, School, Home	Family, Health, School	4

Note. *Participants were asked with which culture(s) and religion (if they identified as religious) they identify themselves. **Range from 0 (a lot of privileges) to 10 (a lot of disadvantages). NA = not available.

Procedure

All interviews were conducted by the second author and a former member of the research group. To allow for greater equality regarding the typical interviewer/interviewee power imbalance (Banister et al., 1994), both interviewers are of immigrant descent. They aimed to establish a comfortable and understanding atmosphere during the interviews to make it easier for the participants to open up and share their experiences. Further, when meeting participants, the interviewers engaged them first in small talk to establish rapport before beginning the interviews. Participants were informed about the aim of the interview and the interview procedure. Afterwards, the interviewers collected the participants' and their parents' signed informed consent forms. Adolescents were orally asked for their consent to audio record the interview and were informed that the audio recordings would be anonymized after the interview. The interviewers then switched on the voice recorder. Further, the adolescents were informed that they do not have to answer questions they do not want to and can stop the interview at any time without repercussions. Interviews were semi-structured following an interview guide. Questions in the interview guide were related to the research topics of the two main investigators: belongingness, discrimination, autonomy, identity, and well-being.

At the beginning and end of the interview, the interviewers conducted a values-based self-affirmation exercise with the students, asking them to reflect on a personally important value. This could be values such as the importance of family or their strengths such as musical talent (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988). Experimental studies have shown that self-affirmation enhances self-esteem and thus buffers the negative effects of stress and identity threat, leading to improved health and academic performance (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Creswell et al., 2005). Participants were presented 12 theme cards with the task of choosing the three cards most important to them: Family, Friends, Religion, Health, Germany, Equality, Home, School, being sportive, being free and independent, being part of a group, and being

musical/artistic. Following the recommendation of Sherman and Cohen (2006), the first and fourth authors focused on prominent values and abilities during adolescence while also creating theme cards relating to their research topics.

The interviewer then continued by inquiring about the participant's selection of cards, the reasons behind their choices, and their decision not to choose the other cards. The first theme card was used as a starting point, and then the interviewer continued with the other cards. While bridging the selected theme cards with the interview guideline questions, open-ended questions were used, encouraging participants to expand as they saw fit. Consequently, some interviews were more in-depth and included more follow-up questions than others, leading to a variation in length. The interviews ranged from 30 to 54 minutes (M = 38.90; SD = 9.11). Rather than directly asking participants about their experiences of discrimination, in the second half of the interview, they were tasked with positioning themselves on a number line (0 = *a lot of privileges,* 10 = *a lot of disadvantages*) and explaining their position. The position indicated their perception of whether they see themselves as having more privileges or disadvantages in their life in Germany.

At the end of the interview, participants were once again invited to select the three theme cards that held the greatest importance for them and to provide an explanation if their choices had changed. Table 1 contains an overview of each participant's theme cards chosen before and after the interview. Finally, interviewers expressed gratitude to the adolescence and handed them an envelope containing 10 Euros. Within the envelope, participants also found a card listing emergency contact numbers in case they ever feel the need to reach out to mental health professionals or other resources.

Data Analysis

Together with two student assistants, the first and fourth authors transcribed all interviews. Afterwards, interviews were checked and proofread. We used inductive and

deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify prominent and recurring patterns in the data. The first author read and re-read the interview transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. As a second step, the first author selected six representative interviews (considering gender and migration status) and developed line-by-line in vivo codes. This step constitutes reducing each sentence to keywords, followed by developing a coding guide with themes, categories, and subcategories. For the development of the coding guide, we not only referred to the data but also to previous research and theoretical works (e.g., Luthar et al., 2000; Titzmann et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). We decided on acculturative challenges and developmental tasks and personal and social resources as four overarching, theory-driven themes. Sentences were used as coding units in MAXQDA (Analytics 2020, Version 20.4.2). During and after coding all interview transcripts, the coding guide was adapted, including adding and merging categories and subcategories. The final coding guide can be found in the supplementary material (Table S1). To ensure reliable coding, a second coder was trained who first coded two interviews (not part of the data set) with the adapted coding guide, received feedback from the first author and then coded all transcripts. Afterwards, both coders compared all statements that they coded. If both coders assigned the same category and subcategory to the same coding unit, we considered this a match. For mismatches, the coders discussed their different coding to arrive at a consensus coding. Interrater reliability was good ($\kappa = 0.68$; Altmann, 1991) and was calculated before the two coders discussed the coding units coded differently. Quotations included in this paper have been translated from German to English by the first author. While changing all participant's names to ensure anonymity, we made sure that the pseudonyms matched the linguistic background of the participant's origin.

3.3 Results

When reporting on the acculturative challenges, developmental tasks and personal and social resources mentioned by our participants, some quantifying language will be used to describe the prevalence of the challenges, tasks, and resources across the interviews (Terry, 2010). While using these terms, we aim to provide some indication of the strength and consistency of the data and not about the quantity of each challenge, task, or resource occurrence. When we use the term *most* or *almost all*, this means at least five refugee youth and/or four youth of immigrant descent referred to the challenge, task, or resource. Where the terms *many, majority* or *common* are used, it refers to occurrences of the challenge, task, or resource in four or five interviews with refugee youth and/or in three or four interviews with youth of immigrant descent. *Some* refers to less than half of the refugee youth and/or youth of immigrant descent.

Acculturative Challenges

When talking about challenges facing in their lives, the majority of refugee youth mentioned difficulties with learning German or their role as a language broker for other family members. Regarding the German language, they mostly reported *"difficult words"* and *"reading German"* as challenging. For example, Hakim (16-year-old boy of immigrant descent) explained: "*I always find difficult things in my life, for example reading German."* Next to the challenge of language acquisition, some refugee youth also talked about their role as a language broker for other family members. Anas (16-year-old refugee boy) explained: "*I was the first in my family who had to learn German, and afterwards, I started to translate everything for them. They find the German language difficult, so they do not speak German very well."* In this context, the adolescents also reported missing parental support with their homework or other school-related tasks, as described by Asiyah (15-year-old refugee girl): *"My parents cannot help and support me with my homework; they do not speak German very well."*

A common theme among both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent were also experiences of discrimination, including ones that were based on ethnicity and/or religion. Both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent reported different types of discrimination, which we grouped into *observed discrimination* and *perceived discrimination*. While observed discrimination experiences include discrimination incidents our participants witnessed but have not been involved in, perceived discrimination experiences refer to incidents that happened directly to them (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2013). Overall, the majority of our participants reported discrimination incidents that happened to themselves. However, some refugee youth also told us about discrimination incidents they observed. Asiyah mentioned a discrimination experience that happened to her close friend: *"My close friend, who is from Africa, gets bullied sometimes. They call her 'Nutella' or 'Poop-Brown'".* Nicolas (15-year-old boy of immigrant descent) reported a similar discrimination experience that happened to him, including being called the *"N-word"* and told to *"go back to your country, where you came from and belong to"*. Another participant, Tobias (16-year-old boy of immigrant descent), mentioned his experience and feelings when confronted with the question *Where are you from?*: "*When I am together with people who do not know me yet, the first question they always ask me is where I am from. This annoys me, but I must accept it.*" Next to experiences of perceived and observed ethnic discrimination, refugee youth shared experiences of religious discrimination. Asiyah reported having experienced discrimination because of her hijab:

> *Four years ago, I used to wear a hijab, and a boy pulled it down and pulled my hair. He said to me that there is no place for Muslims in Germany. This happened directly in front of our house.*

In addition, almost all refugee youth mentioned societal-based challenges they face in Germany, including cultural, financial, and accommodative challenges. Hakim referred to the financial situation of his family: *"In Syria, we had enough money. But when the war started,*

we lost everything. Now, we must start from the beginning, here in Germany." He also described accommodative challenges, which he highlighted in statements such as, *"Our flat is so small and always full"* and "*I leave our flat in my free time; it is too full. This is a problem*." Further, most refugee youth reported cultural differences between their home-country and Germany. Anas referred to the cultural differences between the culture(s) in Germany and his Arab and Muslim family: "*My family is an Arab family, and we are Muslims, so this is a bit different from the culture here in Germany."* Being asked to explain these cultural differences more in detail, he also reported on religious challenges and how little his German friends know about his religion:

> *It is a bit different, what is allowed in life and what is not allowed. In my family, we must wear a hijab and are not allowed to eat pork. For example, when I visited friends, they did not know that I do not eat pork. They did not know many things and live a little bit differently than my family.*

Further, all refugee youth mentioned struggling with separation from friends and family members in their home country. Faris (16-year-old refugee boy) stated: *"I have so many friends I left in Syria. I do not talk to them often because maybe they have forgotten me, or I forgot them."* Anas offered a similar comment: "*I knew that I would lose all my friends and that I must survive in Germany. So, I need to make new friends here."* In addition, some refugee youth also had to leave family members in their home country behind. Djamal (16-year-old refugee boy) explained and stated his wish to be reunited with his family:

> *Partly, I live in Syria because my whole family is not here in Germany. [...] Today, I live with my sister and brother apart. I live only with my mother and father in one apartment. Germany did not allow my brother and sister to come to Germany. Therefore, they had to stay in Turkey. I wish we could be together.*

Developmental Tasks

In addition to acculturative challenges, our participants also mentioned adolescence-specific developmental tasks. When talking about friendships and friends, the majority of refugee youth brought up problems with friends due to different moral standards and interests. Hakim directly referred to friends who take drugs and smoke: *"I know a friend who takes drugs. I left her and another one, who always smokes. I don't like that."* Faris commented similarly when talking about problems with his friends: *"Some of my friends are problematic. They do stuff that I don't want to do. For example, they smoke and drink alcohol, and they always run into trouble. I don't like this atmosphere; it is not my preferred atmosphere."*

Next to problems with their friends, some of our participants also referred to conflicts and discussions with their parents. For both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent, especially the negotiation of more freedom in their daily life while simultaneously maintaining a good relationship with their parents emerged as a central developmental task. Wasim (15-year-old-refugee boy) stated: "*My parents do not allow me a lot of things. But some things I am allowed to do. I also hide things from my parents so that they do not get mad at me."* For Zara (16-year-old girl of immigrant descent), negotiating her autonomy is often related to discussions and disputes with her parents. She also shared her feelings during these discussions and disputes with us:

> *With my parents, the discussions are about what I wear, how I behave, and the people I surround myself with. We often have arguments about that, but they clear up again. [...] First, I am angry, and afterwards, I say to myself that there is no use, and then I give in to the discussion.*

Further, many refugee youth reported problems regarding their academic future planning. Most expressed insecurity and doubts about their academic future after receiving their secondary school certificate. Djamal shared the following thoughts with us:

> *Sometimes, I think it would be best if I would do an apprenticeship, but then I think it would be better to go to the gymnasium. Then, I am not sure if I should go to a specialized gymnasium or a normal gymnasium.*

For Anas, his difficulties with studying and the missing motivation are also related to his doubts regarding his academic future: *"For example, I could be better at school, but I do not have the motivation to study. I try it, but I am unsure if I will receive my secondary school certificate."*

Lastly, some youth of immigrant descent mentioned difficulties related to identity formation. Zara expressed her difficulties during the process of identity exploration with the following statement: "*I do not know who I am. I am still searching."* Beyond problems with the process of identity formation, the majority of refugee youth mentioned facing difficulties in their daily life due to their individual characteristics. While some refugee youth described their restraint and shyness as challenging when finding new friends, Anas referred to his pessimism: *"I am a person who does not think positively. Normally, that should not be the case."*

Some of our participants also described their developmental tasks in relation to their acculturative challenges. While Djamal reported on his difficulties with planning his academic future, he also referred to the deficit-based thinking of his teachers: *"They think I would not manage the transition to the gymnasium, and just teach us students with a migration background on a low level."* In addition, Asijah shared an experience at school with a teacher: *"The teacher said that I will not be a good primary teacher because of my bad German language skills."* Afterwards, she reported insecurities about her academic future: *"Either I continue with school, or maybe I stop and do an apprenticeship. I do not know."* Further, Zara described how her wish to spend time with her German friends is colliding again and again with the expectations of her parents:

> *I want to be with my German friends; it is easy with them, and I feel free with them. But it is difficult with my parents and what they expect. It's always about how I should*

behave, which people I should surround myself with and what I should wear. Then, we often argue.

Personal Resources

All refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent stated individual characteristics they find helpful in their daily life and when coping with challenges. Most of them highlighted their openness, optimism, and empathy as helpful. For example, Nicolas (15-year-old boy of immigrant descent) mentioned: *"I am always open for new things and people."* and Faris talked about his openness when connecting with new friends: "*When I was in the seventh grade, I tried to be open and then I found more German friends."* In addition, Faris and Anas mentioned their positive and optimistic attitude: *"I am always positive, I do not want problems. My mind is positive, and I always try to give a positive energy to other people."* (Faris), "*I always think positive when I have problems. Life goes on and I know that I can manage the problems with my positive thinking."* (Anas) Next to their self-mentioned individual characteristics, specific statements of the adolescents showed their self-efficacy, self-confidence, and independence. With her statement, "*I know that I will gain my secondary school qualification."*, Asiyah did not only express optimism but also self-confidence and trust into her own abilities.

Beyond their helpful individual characteristics, some refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent also expressed their ethnic, religious and/or sexual identity as clear to them. Zara described carefully who she is and what belongs to her identity: *"I would say that I am a girl with a migration background and that I have a big family, and that I can speak German very well, and that I have a lot of friends."* For Julius (15-year-old boy of immigrant descent), his ethnic identity seems to be clear to him, while combining multiple ethnic identities: *"My mother is a French woman and my father died but is Polish and therefore I am a German, French and Polish boy."* Asiyah described herself as an Afghan girl and referred to her freedom to decide not to wear a hijab when talking about the question what identity means for her:

"*Identity means freedom for me. I do not have to wear a hijab here in Germany; it is not obligatory, and I also do not want to wear it. This is identity for me."* For Djamal and Anas, their home country – Syria – plays a significant role when they talk about their identity: *"I am Syrian, a proud Syrian. This is where I come from."* (Djamal), *"I am Syrian, Muslim and Arab and I was born in Syria."* (Anas)

Almost all refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent mentioned positive thoughts for the future, including academic future plans and other things they have already planned for their future. While Zara explained, *"I would like to work in politics because I like to have a voice."*, Nicolas expressed the thought of becoming a paramedic. Other adolescents talked about their dreams, including the wish to travel the world, to help and always be there for their family and friends, and to earn enough money to buy a flat for the whole family.

When we talked with the participants about the role of religion in their lives, all refugee youth and one adolescent of immigrant descent mentioned to be religious. For all of them, their religion constitutes an important resource. While for Zara (self-identified as Christian), the knowledge of belonging to God represents a valuable resource in her life, all refugee youth (self-identified as Muslim or Druze) referred to their religion as a source of strength. For example, Hakim mentioned: *"My religion is important to me. It gives me strength."* Wasim described: "*When I read the Quran, it calms me down, and I feel free. It just calms me down. Even when I pray."*

Social Resources

All refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent referred to their friends as an important social resource in their lives. More precisely, they referenced different kinds of social support, including emotional and practical support. Regarding the emotional support from their friends, adolescents described their friends as *"good listeners"*, *"helpful"*, *"understanding"*, *"encouraging"*, "*always there for me, in good and in bad times"*. Most refugee youth and youth

of immigrant descent stated that they see their friends as persons of trust and can talk with them about everything. For example, Tobias mentioned: "*I can talk about everything with my friends, especially with my best friend. When I am sad or lovesick my best friend is my first contact person. I can confide her my problems, and she understands me."* Further, they described their friends as *"the main component in my life"*, *"second family"*, *"very important persons in my life"*, and *"most important thing in my life"*. Zara stated: "*I could not live without my friends."* Some refugee youth described especially same-ethnic friendships as supportive. Asiyah mentioned:

> *For example, I am not allowed to go out in the evening when I was already out the evening before. In contrast to my German friends, it is easier with my friends with the same background. I don't have to explain to them why I am not allowed because it is the same for them, and they directly understand me.*

Beyond the emotional support, both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent further described the practical support of their friends as helpful. This included support with school-related tasks and plans for the future. In addition to receiving friends' support, the adolescents mentioned mutual activities and experiences as a valuable resource and source of fun. When asked what she prefers to do with her friends, Asiyah answered: *"Usually, we go into the city, go shopping and create TikToks together. This is fun. Most of my time, I spend with my friends."*

In addition to their friends, all participants mentioned their family as an important social resource. For example, they described their family as *"a source of strength"* or *"the most important thing in my life"*. Zara stated:

> *I think a family is essential in life. Without a family, life does not make any sense. Without a family, I would not have a safe haven, and I would be alone. I could not imagine being without my family and sisters and brothers.*

For another participant, Nicolas (15-year-old boy of immigrant descent), the trust of this family builds an essential resource for him. Through his parents' trust, he can enjoy a lot of freedom, including going out in the evening or meeting friends late at night. In addition, the feeling of belonging was reported by refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent as important when talking with them about their families. Anas explained: "*My family is the most important thing in my life because these are the people who were and are always next to me in my life, and I belong to them."* Beyond social support, adolescents stated joint activities with their family, including family traditions, as a big enrichment. More precisely, they referred to joint movie nights, walks in nature, family trips, games evenings and traditions, as starting into the weekend with a joint dinner every Friday. When talking about the joint activities, participants also reported how these activities foster their psychological well-being. For example, Hakim mentioned to *"feel happy and joyful"* after joint family activities.

The majority of refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent also stated their experiences with teachers at school as supportive and referred to a cohesive school and class climate. Some refugee youth referred to their teacher's time and empathy (e.g., *"Most of the teachers at my school know how to interact with us, I mean students with a migration background. [...]And they understand us and have time and respect for us when we want to learn something."* (Faris)), and described their teachers as a resource of motivation and as supporters *"who believe in us"*. For Frais, his teachers do constitute not only a resource of motivation, but also a resource helping him to foster his psychological well-being, including his self-esteem: "*They say that I can do it; this helps me to feel better and believe in me."*

For some adolescents, the feeling of belonging to their class is also an important resource. Zara and Wasim mentioned feeling good at school because of the pleasant atmosphere in their class. Anas explained: "*We have a good class community. Therefore, school is like a second home for me. Here, I feel very good."* Beyond the feeling of belonging, Julius referred

to the cohesion of his class and how the coronavirus pandemic had even brought the class community closer together: *"Our class community has changed for the better. We got to know each other better, and supported us mutually."*

Next to reporting on their personal and social resources and how they relate to their psychological well-being, some refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent also mentioned how their social resources help them to master their acculturative challenges. More precisely, they referred to their parents' and teachers' support when dealing with discriminatory experiences. Asiyah referred to the feeling of trust, allowing her to share her experiences of ethnic discrimination at school with her parents: *"When people call me 'the Chinese girl', I talk with my parents about it. They support me, and I feel comfortable with them."* In addition, Nicolas mentioned having received support from his classroom teacher and a school social worker after he experienced ethnic discrimination at school: *"I talked with my classroom teacher, and together with the school social worker she talked with the boys and told them that they should stop calling me names because every person is born equal."*

3.4 Discussion

Driven by and focusing on what is essential for immigrant-origin youth, this qualitative study investigated refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' acculturative challenges and developmental tasks and their interplay. Using a risk and protection framework and applying a strength-based perspective, we investigated not only immigrant-origin youth's challenges and tasks but also their personal and social resources to master these challenges and tasks and to foster their psychological well-being.

Referring to our first research question, both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent face a variety of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks. Furthermore, participants' reports suggest the intertwinement of several developmental tasks and acculturative challenges. In accordance with previous research on immigrant-origin youth's

acculturative challenges (Titzmann et al., 2011), our participants mainly referred to language, discrimination, and socio-cultural hassles in the interviews. When looking at the language hassles mentioned by the participants, most refugee youth referred to their role as language brokers for their parents and other family members. This aligns with previous research. For example, a study by Fuligni and Telzer (2012) showed that about 90 % of immigrant-origin youth translate documents for their parents. Some studies show that such acculturation-specific responsibilities can also generalize to universal responsibilities, resulting in immigrant-origin youth taking on more responsibilities at home than their nonimmigrant-origin peers (e.g., Titzmann et al., 2011).

Further and in line with previous research (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2013), experiences of ethnic and/or religious discrimination seem to constitute a significant acculturative challenge for both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. When sharing their experiences of discrimination with us, youth also referred to experiences of foreigner objectification. Referred to as experiences of being perceived as a foreigner regardless of one's generational status, citizenship or self-identification, such experiences can – especially for those in the country where one was born and raised – convey the feeling that one does not and perhaps will never belong (Juang et al., 2021). When talking about experiences of discrimination, some youth also referred to teachers and reported about their deficit thinking beliefs. Deficit thinking entails blaming marginalized students, their families and communities for the challenges and injustices they face; for example, a student's heritage culture is assumed to be the source of academic struggles (Anderson, 2013; Davis & Museuss, 2019). The results of our study show that the deficit thinking beliefs of teachers constitute a risk factor for immigrant-origin youth's academic development and future planning, including insecurities regarding their academic future and doubts about their academic skills.

In addition, and in accordance with previous research (Anderson, 2001; Muller et al., 2019), for refugee youth, the separation from friends and family members in their home country is an additional acculturative challenge. Further, refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' reports suggest that cultural differences between the youth's heritage and German culture constitute another major acculturative challenge. However, when reporting on cultural differences, the youth also referred to the acculturative gap between their parents and themselves and how it relates to different autonomy expectations. More precisely, and already found in previous studies (e.g., Garcia, 2018), value discrepancies brought on by the acculturation gap between the youth and their parents resulted in different perceptions of autonomy expectations, resulting in conflicts between the youth and their parents. While this shows how immigrant-origin youth's socio-cultural challenges are intertwined with the developmental task of autonomy achievement, future qualitative research should examine this interrelation in more in detail with more in-depth questions.

Next to acculturative challenges, all participants mentioned difficulties related to their normative developmental tasks during adolescence. Specifically, the process of identity formation seems to be related to difficulties for youth of immigrant descent. More precisely, some youth of immigrant descent described the process of identity exploration as challenging. Still, they did not refer to a specific context that might have caused or contributed to the reported difficulties within the process of identity formation, such as experiences of ethnic discrimination (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

However, when we talked with our participants about the topics, they had chosen from the theme cards, and after they positioned themselves on the number line regarding the question of whether they see themselves as having more privileges or disadvantages in their life in Germany, all refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent indicated to possess a variety of personal and social resources. Regarding personal resources, a clear sense of one's identity

seems to be an important resource for some refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent. Contrary to the youth who described facing difficulties during the process of identity formation, they described their ethnic, religious and/or sexual identity as clear to them. Many refugee youth also mentioned their religion as an essential personal resource (e.g., a source of strength). This aligns with the findings of Abo-Zena and Barry (2013), highlighting religion as a significant resource for immigrant-origin adolescents and young adults. Still, our participants did not refer to their personal resources as promotive and/or protective factors regarding their psychological well-being when facing acculturative challenges and developmental tasks. To examine the potentially promotive and protective roles of ethnic minority youth's personal resources in more detail, future qualitative studies should apply more in-depth interviews. In this regard, a closer look could be, for example, taken on ethnic minority youth's experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination and their ethnic and religious identity. While serving as a resource and providing shelter from discriminatory experiences, higher ethnic and/or religious identification can serve as a buffer against the detrimental effects of discrimination on positive adjustment and well-being (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Yip et al., 2019).

Regarding social resources, our results are in line with previous study results (Shoshani et al., 2014; Simons et al., 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). For refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent, friendships, family, and teachers seem to constitute supportive social networks. While referring to the social support of their proximal environment, it seems that for refugee youth, especially same-ethnic friendships present an important resource. In line with findings by Jugert and colleagues (2013) indicating higher stability of same-ethnic friendships, refugee youth in our sample mentioned a better understanding of cultural norms and rules when referring to their same-ethnic friendships.

In addition, social resources seem to be an important promotive factor for refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' psychological well-being. While describing their

teachers as a source of motivation fostering their psychological well-being, our participants also referred to their school and class community as a source of support, promoting their psychological well-being. Furthermore, teachers and parents seem to be an important social resource for the youth when dealing with discriminatory experiences. Contrary to previous studies (e.g., Juang et al., 2016; Wenzing et al., 2021) indicating the protective role of peer support rather than parental support in the face of ethnic discrimination, some of our participants specifically mentioned the support of their parents as an essential resource when dealing with ethnic discrimination. As some of the participants also mentioned the support of their teachers when dealing with experiences of ethnic discrimination, an exciting avenue for future research would be to examine what kind of support of teachers benefits the youth. As indicated by Civitillo and colleagues (2021), for example, positive teacher-student relationships could constitute a protective factor for immigrant-origin youth exposed to ethnic discrimination.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study should be considered in the light of some limitations and qualifications. Our study highlights refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' perspectives on their acculturative challenges, developmental tasks, and resources in the context of their psychological well-being. In addition, the results constitute an important starting point for future research. However, future qualitative research should delve more deeply into the intertwining of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks and should examine potential coping mechanisms related to immigrant-origin youth's resources in the context of specific challenges. In addition, further research could utilize a similar approach from the perspective of parents and teachers to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Lastly, follow-up interviews with the participants would allow to analyze the potential change of acculturative challenges and developmental tasks and the importance of specific resources

over time. For example, for some immigrant-origin youth, the process of identity formation might constitute a challenge during adolescence; still, as young adults, they might be more concerned about their future working lives.

3.5 Conclusion and Implications

This study identified refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' reflections on their acculturative challenges, developmental tasks, and resources in Germany. Results emphasize discriminatory experiences, language, and sociocultural hassles as significant acculturative challenges in addition to immigrant-origin youth's normative developmental tasks, including difficulties with identity formation and autonomy development. However, refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent also reported a remarkable variety of personal and social resources, such as individual characteristics, religion and social support from friends, family and teachers. Thus, it is crucial to promote refugee youth's and youth of immigrant descents' personal and social resources while also diminishing their challenges associated with acculturative and developmental tasks.

In this regard, schools could be fruitful places, for example, for interventions aiming to prevent and tackle discrimination while fostering youth's identity development and well-being (e.g., Juang et al., 2022). Training opportunities for teachers conveying a strength-based perspective on their students and focusing on creating an inclusive and supportive environment at school could also benefit immigrant-origin youth's positive development and adjustment (Barrett & Berger, 2021). Further, programs targeting the integration of immigrant-origin youth's parents may also help to reduce the acculturative gap between parents and their children, resulting in fewer conflicts and a redistribution of responsibilities (Esser, 1980).

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3.7 Supplementary Material

Table S1

Coding Guide

Theme	Category	Sub-category	Description
Acculturative challenges	Sociocultural hassles	Friends: No friends	Interviewee mentions not having friends, problems related to making friends in Germany/with Germans
		Friends: Separation from/missing friends	Interviewee mentions separation from/missing friends in their home country
		Friends: Conflicts, break-up	Interviewee describes conflicts, breaking up with friends
		Family: Separation from/missing family members	Interviewee mentions separation from/missing family (members) in their home country
		German society: Legal challenges	Interviewee describes problems related to their/family legal status, permission to stay, problems with paperwork
		German society: Financial challenges	Interviewee mentions having problems with money (e.g., lost everything because of war), not enough money (e.g., have to send money to family members in their home country, not finding a job)
		German society: Accommodative challenges	Interviewee mentions problems related to their accommodation (e.g., trouble finding private housing, inadequate, small, lack of privacy)
		German society: Cultural challenges	Interviewee mentions cultural differences between their home country and Germany, including cultural norms, values
			Interviewee mentions problems regarding their ethnic identity/ethnic belonging, affiliation (e.g., feelings in between two cultures)
		German society: Religious challenges	Interviewee reflects on the religious life in Germany, differences in religion, and how it (their religion) is perceived by Germans
	Language hassles	Language acquisition	Interviewee describes having problems with learning German (e.g., grammar, pronunciation, new words, learning to read)
		Other language hassles	Interviewee describes having problems due to other family members'/others' insufficient German language skills/supporting them (e.g., as a language broker)

	Discrimination hassles	Perceived ethnic discrimination	Interviewee describes a discrimination incident that happened to them, related to their ethnicity
		Perceived religious discrimination	Interviewee describes a discrimination incident that happened to them, related to their religion
		Observed ethnic discrimination	Interviewee describes a discrimination incident (due to ethnicity) that they witnessed/ observed, but haven't been involved
		Observed religious discrimination	Interviewee describes a discrimination incident (due to religion) that they witnessed/ observed, but haven't been involved
Developmental challenges	Friends	Loss, break-up, friendship ended	Interviewee describes breaking up with friends, ending friendship, challenges with making new friends
		Conflicts/Problems	Interviewee describes conflicts and/or problems with friends
	Family	With family members	Interviewee mentions having problems/ lack of cohesion/disagreements/not getting along with one or more family members e.g., parents do not understand them, generational gap)
	School	Education	Interviewee mentions problems with studying (e.g., struggling with homework, academic future planning)
		Teacher	Interviewee mentions problems at school caused by teachers, (e.g., not getting along with teachers, disadvantages because of grades)
	Personality/Individual characteristics		Interviewee mentions having problems due to their characteristics (e.g., being shy, pessimistic)
	Identity		Interviewee mentions problems with identity (formation) (e.g., do not know who they are or how to describe themselves, where they belong)
Social resources	Family	Emotional support, belonging, cohesion	Interviewee mentions the social support, the feeling of cohesion, well-being, belonging to their family as important to them
		Other support	Interviewee mentions the support of family regarding practical aspects (e.g., school related tasks, future plans)
		Experiences/Activities	Interviewee mentions family activities and experiences, spending time together as important to them (e.g., traveling together, having dinner together)

		Traditions	Interviewee mentions family traditions as important to them, (e.g., birthday celebrations)
	Friends	Emotional support, belonging, closeness	Interviewee mentions the social support, the feeling of closeness, belonging to their friends as important to them
		Other support	Interviewee mentions practical support of friends (e.g., regarding school related tasks)
		Experiences/Activities	Interviewee mentions activities and experiences with friends as important to them, spending time together
		Same-ethnic friendships	Interviewee describes friends with the same ethnic background as supportive (e.g., regarding the understanding of norms and rules)
	School	Teacher	Interviewee mentions positive experiences/support from teachers at school
		Classroom climate, belonging	Interviewee describes their classroom climate as supportive, feeling good in their class/sense of belonging
		Belonging (religion/God)	Interviewee mentions the feeling of belonging to their religion/God as important to them
Personal resources	Identity		Interviewee describes their (ethnic/religious/sexual/...) identity as important/clear to them, reflects about their identities
	Religion		Interviewee mentions their religion as a source of power/empowerment/confidence
	Personality/Individual characteristics		Interviewee describes/implies their individual characteristics as helpful, (e.g., being open, social, emphatic, optimistic)
		Future thoughts	Interviewee mentions positive future thoughts (e.g., about their future plans)
Psychological well-being	Positive psychological well-being		Interviewee describes positive emotions they have experienced, or they are currently experiencing (e.g., feeling happy, satisfied, confident) in the context of acculturation/development
	Negative psychological well-being		Interviewee describes negative emotions they have experienced, or they are currently experiencing (e.g., feeling sad, afraid, lonely, homesick) in the context of acculturation/development

4 Study 3: Ethno-Religious Discrimination and Adjustment among Muslim Adolescents: The Promotive and Protective Roles of Ethnic and Religious Identification

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Abstract

Due to rising Islamophobia in Europe today, Muslim ethnic minority adolescents are at great risk of experiencing identity-based harassment at school with often dire negative consequences for their adjustment. This study extends previous research on ethnic discrimination by adding a focus on the religious discrimination of Muslim adolescents and its effect on their psychological (i.e., depressive symptoms and self-esteem) and behavioral adjustment (i.e., disruptive behavior at school). In addition, we consider Muslim adolescents' ethnic and religious identification as two factors that may promote the adolescents' adjustment and protect them from the negative consequences of discriminatory experiences. We used survey data from $N = 105$ Muslim ethnic minority adolescents ($M_{age} = 13.30$, $SD_{age} = 0.75$, 45% female). Factor analysis revealed that the adolescents did not differentiate between ethnic and religious discriminatory experiences. Results show that higher perceived ethno-religious discrimination (PERD) was related to more depressive symptoms. While higher ethnic identification was associated with greater self-esteem, higher religious identification was related to fewer depressive symptoms. Contrary to our expectation, Muslim adolescents who were highly identified with their ethnic group reported more depressive symptoms when experiencing more PERD. Moreover, their self-esteem was negatively affected by higher PERD when possessing high religious identification, while for low religious identification a positive effect of higher PERD on self-esteem was revealed. Thus, despite the direct promotive effects, it seems that ethnic and religious identification also make youth more vulnerable to discrimination. Results highlight the importance of developing evidence-based intervention programs for schools to tackle identity-based harassment.

Keywords: Perceived ethno-religious discrimination, ethnic identification, religious identification, Muslim ethnic minority adolescents, psychological & behavioral adjustment

4.1 Introduction

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in the US, Anti-Muslim and islamophobic sentiments have also increased in Europe (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2022), resulting in a rising number of threats and attacks against Muslims and mosques in Germany (Federal Ministry, 2021). As negative feelings and fears towards Islam and its followers tend to be already present in adolescence (Kaddor et al., 2018), Muslim ethnic minority adolescents[1] are at great risk of experiencing discrimination at school. Indeed, evidence from Germany shows that particularly youth who are Muslim or who are perceived by others to be Muslim often face discrimination at school by peers and teachers (Expert Council on Integration and Migration, 2018). Yet, it is unclear if this discrimination is mostly on ethnic or religious grounds or both. So far studies have focused on ethnic discrimination but did not include religious discrimination of (Muslim) adolescents and its impact on their adjustment over and above ethnic discrimination (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Maes et al., 2014).

When studying the influence of perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) and perceived religious discrimination (PRD) on adolescents' psychological and behavioral adjustment, a risk and resilience framework offers an appropriate lens to identify risk and protective factors and how they work in concert and influence adolescents' adjustment. Resilience can be described as the adolescents' ability to do well in forms of positive patterns of adjustment or development, during or following risk factors that threaten their adaptive function and future development (Masten, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). While examining PED and PRD as potential risk factors for Muslim adolescents' adjustment, it is also important to identify factors that protect the adolescents from the potential negative consequences of PED and PRD and promote their adjustment. Feeling a strong sense of connection to one's social groups may play a key role in

[1] We use the term *Muslim ethnic minority adolescents* to describe adolescents, who self-identified as Muslims, have at least one foreign-born parent or grandparent and either have been born outside (first generation) or within (second and third generation) Germany.

maintaining psychological well-being as well as managing different forms of social identity-based devaluation (Haslam et al., 2007; Lou et al., 2022). Research has yet to examine the potential protective role of religious identification over and above ethnic identification in the association between ethnic and religious discrimination and adjustment.

In this study, we specifically explore the roles of PED and PRD at school by teachers and peers on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' adjustment while considering ethnic and religious identification as possible promotive and protective factors. This study extends previous research (Greene et al., 2006; Tineo et al., 2021) in five ways, namely by (a) specifically examining the roles of PED and PRD in the school context; (b) focusing on the impact of PRD on Muslim adolescents' adjustment over and above that of PED; (c) testing the buffering role of religious identification over and above ethnic identification; (d) including two psychological (depressive symptoms and self-esteem) and one behavioral (disruptive behavior at school) indicator of adjustment (with most studies focusing on psychological outcomes only; e.g., Bierwiaczonek & Waldzus, 2016); and (e) focusing on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents, who in particular constitute an at-risk population for identity-based discrimination due to rising Islamophobia in Europe.

Perceived Discrimination as a Risk Factor for Psychological and Behavioral Adjustment

During adolescence, identity formation and thus developing a stable and enduring self is a core developmental task. In the school context adolescents use their peers and teachers as a reflective mirror to gather information about themselves (Matsueda, 1992). By relying on the perceptions and thoughts of their peers and teachers in this way, ethnic minority adolescents become highly vulnerable to experiences of ethnic and religious identity-based discrimination. Perceiving that something about the self is rejected or disliked by others can lead to a loss of self-esteem, more depressive symptoms and greater psychological stress when incorporating these discriminatory appraisals (Denise, 2012; Thijs et al., 2018). Being discriminated against

can also evoke rebellion from some minority adolescents against unjust treatment, resulting in negative behavioral adjustment (Marcelo & Yates, 2019).

For Muslim adolescents, experiences of PED and PRD at school by peers and teachers can evoke the feeling of being devalued because of their ethnicity and their religion, and thus can act as risk factors regarding their adjustment and developmental outcomes (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018; Utley et al., 2021). While multiple studies (for a meta-analytic review, see Benner et al., 2018) highlighted PED as an important risk factor for psychological (i.e., poorer self-esteem and more depressive symptoms) and behavioral (i.e., more aggression and delinquency) adjustment during adolescence, studies focusing on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' experiences of religious discrimination at schools and its implications for their adjustment are rare. Balkaya and colleagues (2019) found that religious discrimination is related to more internalizing problems for Muslim-American adolescents. Still, to our knowledge, research has yet to examine the impact of religious discrimination on Muslim adolescents' adjustment over and above that of ethnic discrimination.

Two Potential Promotive and Protective Factors: Ethnic and Religious Identification

While examining PED and PRD as potential risk factors for the psychological and behavioral adjustment amongst Muslim ethnic minority adolescents in Germany, it is also necessary to identify factors than can counteract and buffer these effects. Within the risk and resilience framework these factors can be described as promotive and protective factors, ensuring that children and adolescents exhibit positive developmental outcomes despite at-risk contexts (Masten, 2015). While promotive factors counteract the risk factor through their direct positive influence on developmental outcomes, protective factors serve as buffers, ensuring that the relation between risks and problematic development is attenuated (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Identifying with their ethnic group can help adolescents gain a better sense of who they are (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). In addition, research on Muslim adolescents from Germany

suggests that religious identity should be considered as an additional, related but distinct facet of identity (Fleischmann et al., 2019). Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Branscombe and colleagues (1999) argued that strong ethnic identification can serve as a psychological buffer against the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination, assuming that feeling connected with one's ethnic group compensates for the negative consequences of ethnic discrimination. Thus, for Muslim adolescents, when experiencing ethnic and religious discrimination, high identification with their ethnic and religious group may buffer the effects of discrimination on their adjustment by reinforcing unique aspects of these two groups. While having a clearer commitment and stronger attachment to their ethnic and religious group, Muslim adolescents can still feel good when being discriminated because they focus on positive aspects of their group memberships which compensates for the negative consequences of discrimination. In reverse it means that Muslim adolescents with low ethnic and religious identification may have less psychological resources to deal with instances of PED and PRD.

There is a well-established relationship between ethnic identification and adjustment outcomes (see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014 for an international meta-analysis). Research in Germany has found that adolescents of immigrant descent with a stronger ethnic identity may have better adjustment outcomes and well-being (e.g., Kunyu et al., 2021). Regarding the protective effect of ethnic identification in the relationship between perceived discrimination and adjustment, youth with a strong sense of ethnic identification were found to be less negatively affected in their adjustment by perceived discrimination than those who were less identified (Greene et al., 2006; Kunyu et al., 2021).

Another central identity of Muslim youth is their religious identity. Religion and ethnicity are often strongly intertwined and influence each other (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996), with religious practices becoming and shaping cultural habits (see e.g., Yilmaz, 2014). Religion is often considered among the core cultural elements that immigrant parents aim to pass on to their children (Phalet et al., 2018). In addition, in the current intergroup climate generic social

representations tend to ascribe ethnic minority youth who originated from majority-Muslim countries a Muslim identity further blurring their religious and ethnic identities (Slootman, 2014).

However, despite possible interconnections between their religious and ethnic identity, Fleischmann and colleagues (2019) have shown that Muslim youth do distinguish in their self-identification between their religious and ethnic group membership to some extent. Similar to research on ethnic identification, studies have shown that religious identification (i.e., feeling commitment to one's religious group) may act also as a promotive and protective factor for Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' adjustment (e.g., Balkaya et al., 2019). For example, research amongst U.S. college students shows a protective role of Muslim identity on mental health in the face of discrimination (Tineo et al., 2021). To our knowledge research has yet to examine religious identification as a protective factor over and above ethnic identification for Muslim adolescents in Europe.

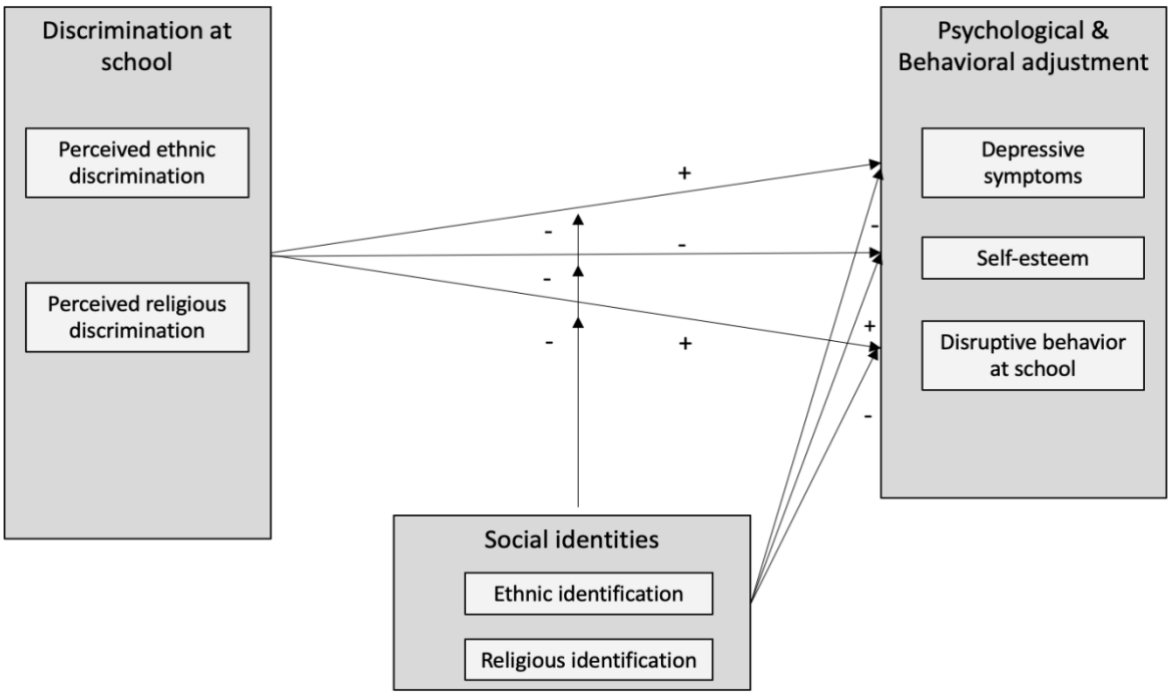
The Present Study

As shown in Figure 1, we investigated the associations of ethnic and religious identification with different aspects of psychological and behavioral adjustment (depressive symptoms, self-esteem and disruptive behavior at school) among Muslim ethnic minority adolescents in Germany in the face of PED and PRD at school. Using a risk and resilience perspective (Jenson et al., 2006), we expected that high experiences of PED and PRD at school will be associated with lower adjustment (i.e., more depressive symptoms, less self-esteem and more disruptive behavior at school; Hypothesis 1). Consistent with research showing that higher ethnic (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2014) and religious (e.g., Balkaya et al., 2019) identification have beneficial effects on ethnic minority adolescents' mental health and adjustment, we, moreover, expected Muslim ethnic minority adolescents to show better adjustment outcomes when identifying highly with their ethnic (Hypothesis 2a) or religious group (Hypothesis 2b).

Based on previous findings on the buffering effects of ethnic and Muslim identity (Kunyu et al., 2021; Tineo et al., 2021), we hypothesized that ethnic (Hypothesis 3) and religious (Hypothesis 4) identification will buffer the negative effects of PED and PRD on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' adjustment.

Figure 1

Summary of Expected Relations



4.2 Materials and Methods

Data and Participants

We used data from $N = 105$ Muslim ethnic minority students in Germany. Students self-identified as Muslim, indicated to have at least one foreign-born parent or grandparent and have been born outside (first generation) or within (second and third generation[2]) Germany.

[2] While $n = 34$ adolescents indicated to have at least one foreign-parent (second generation), $n = 1$ indicated to have at least one foreign-born grand-parent (third generation).

Data collection took place in 2021 and 2022 across 18 classrooms in six culturally diverse schools in Halle (Saale) and Berlin, Germany. While seven classrooms each participated from non-academic track secondary schools and comprehensive secondary schools, four classrooms from academic track secondary schools took part in our study. Data of all students of participating classes was collected. On average, classrooms were composed of 51% youth of immigrant descent, with 32 % self-identified as Muslim. Schools were recruited at network meetings and school staff meetings, where we presented our study, and we obtained approval from the education authorities of Berlin and Saxony-Anhalt as well as parental consent for students to participate in the study. Adolescents completed the paper-pencil survey voluntary during two class periods and received a small gift for their participation. Anonymity was guaranteed and the survey materials were available in German, the language of school instruction. If students had comprehension and/ or language-related questions when filling out the questionnaire, research assistants were present to help them. The study was preregistered on OSF (https://osf.io/zg6fv).

While ages of our sample ranged from 12 to 15 (M_{age} = 13.30, SD_{age} = 0.75), 45% identified themselves as female. Moreover, participants primarily stated Syrian (n = 28), German-Syrian (n = 18), Turkish (n = 16) and Kurdish (n = 16) as their heritage identities. Of n = 70 first-generation immigrant participants, n = 38 indicated to have left their home country because of persecution, fear of violent conflicts and/or war and were therefore considered refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951).

Measures

Psychological and Behavioral Adjustment

Seven items of the German version (Kohlmann & Gerbershagen, 2006) of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) measured the extent to which participants reported depressive symptoms (e.g., “I felt like a bad person”; α = 0.89) on

a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all or less then 1 day last week*) to 4 (*five to seven days last week*). Self-esteem was assessed with four items (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"; α = 0.81) of the revised German version of the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (Collani & Herzberg, 2003) on a 4-point Likert-scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*).

For disruptive behavior at school, adolescents answered four items (e.g., "How often did you throw something around during class in the last 4 weeks?"; α = 0.72) on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*very often*) from Jenkins' (1995) scale on delinquency and school commitment. These items were previously used with a similar sample (Schachner et al., 2018). Both, for psychological and behavioral adjustment item structures were revealed based on factor analyses.

Ethnic and Religious Identification

We measured ethnic and religious identification (commitment) with five items each on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). While the original items by Leszczensky and Gräbs Santiago (2014) measured ethnic identity affirmation, we created parallel items for religious identity (e.g., "I feel like I am part of my religion"; α = 0.91). For ethnic identity, reliability was improved (α = 0.91) when only three items were retained. Items can be found in the Supplementary Material, Table S1. Results of Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) revealed acceptable model fit for both, ethnic (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.061 [0.052, 0.078]; SRMR = 0.046; CFI = 0.913; TLI = 0.902; χ^2 = 114.297, $p < 0.001$) and religious identification (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.053 [0.041, 0.069]; SRMR = 0.040; CFI = 0.932; TLI = 0.908; χ^2 = 117.398, $p < 0.001$).

Perceived Ethno-Religious Discrimination

We used items by Titzmann and colleagues (2011) for ethnic discrimination (e.g., "My schoolmates laughed at me because I have a different heritage culture"), formulating parallel items for religious discrimination. Adolescents responded on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*more than 10 times*). As the scales for perceived ethnic and religious discrimination correlated highly

($r(103) = .834$, $p < .001$), we treated them as a single 10-item scale measuring *perceived ethno-religious discrimination* ($\alpha = 0.90$). Results of our one-factor CFA revealed an acceptable model fit (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.033 [0.021, 0.058]; SRMR = 0.017; CFI = 0.930; TLI = 0.870; χ^2 = 378. 286, $p = 0.081$). Items can be found in the Supplementary Material, Table S1.

Control Variables

To estimate net effects of the main predictor variables, *age*, *gender*[3] (1 = girls, 0 = boys), *immigrant generation* (1 = first generation, 0 = second and third generation), *refugee status* (1 = refugee, 0 = no refugee), *school track* (1 = non-academic track secondary schools, 0 = academic track secondary schools) and *socioeconomic status* (SES) were included as statistical controls in our models. The SES of adolescents was assessed with the question whether the adolescent has his or her own room at home (1 = yes, 0 = no) (Boyce et al., 2006).

Analyses

We tested our hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus 8, version 1.6 (Muthen & Muthen, 2012-2018), controlling for age, gender, immigrant generation, refugee status, school track and SES. We tested direct effects of PERD, ethnic and religious identification on psychological and behavioral adjustment outcomes (Model 1) and interaction effects of PERD with ethnic and religious identification on the adjustment measures (Model 2) for Muslim ethnic minority adolescents. Model fit was evaluated with Chi-square ($p > .05$), Comparative fit index (CFI > .90), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI > .90), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < .08), and Standardized Root Mean square Residuals (SRMR < .08) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Models were estimated with full information maximum likelihood (FIML), which is recommended to effectively make use of all available information while accommodating missing values (Enders, 2010).

[3] While indicating their gender, participants could also choose “Non-binary”; in our sample no participant did this.

4.3 Results

Descriptive Results

Our participants reported a moderate amount of PERD at school (range 1–4; *M* = 1.38, *SD* = 0.63). The mean scores of ethnic (*M* = 3.54, *SD* = 0.64) and religious (*M* = 3.60, *SD* = 0.63) identification were close to the positive end of their 4-point scale, suggesting that Muslim ethnic minority adolescents identified quite strongly with their ethnic and religious group, respectively. Concerning their psychological and behavioral adjustment, participants showed a moderate level of depressive symptoms (range 1–4; *M* = 1.79, *SD* = 0.76) and disruptive behavior at school (range 1–5; *M* = 2.08, *SD* = 0.90). Meanwhile, their average self-esteem score was slightly over '3' on its 4-point scale (*M* = 3.05, *SD* = 0.72), indicating psychological adjustment on a rather high level. Bivariate correlations between the main study variables can be found in the Supplementary Material, Table S2. Except for the chi-square test, the final model fit for the rest of the indices was adequate to good (RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.055 [0.043, 0.068]; SRMR = 0.109; CFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.880; χ^2 = 105.314, $p < 0.001$).

Results of Structural Equation Modeling

Model results with standardized regression coefficients, while controlling for immigrant generation, refugee status, age, gender, school track and SES, are presented in Table 1. In Model 1 (direct effects) higher experiences of PERD at school were significantly related to more depressive symptoms. (β = 0.476, $p < 0.001$) while they were unrelated to self-esteem and disruptive behavior at school. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was only partly confirmed.

Partly confirming Hypothesis 2a and 2b, both measures of identification were associated with some indicators of a better psychological adjustment. More precisely, Muslim ethnic minority adolescents who reported more ethnic identification also reported higher self-esteem (β = 0.393, $p < 0.001$), while no associations were found with depressive symptoms and disruptive behavior at school. In addition, a higher religious identification was significantly

related to less depressive symptoms (β = -0.336, p = 0.001), while no associations were found with self-esteem and disruptive behavior at school.

Concerning Hypothesis 3, in Model 2 (interaction effects) a significant two-way interaction effect between PERD at school and ethnic identification on depressive symptoms emerged. Conducting simple slope analysis (Aiken et al., 1991), we examined the effect of PERD at school on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' depressive symptoms separately for those low (1 SD < M) and high (1 SD > M) in ethnic identification. Adolescents showed more depressive symptoms when they perceived more ethno-religious discrimination, but only when they were highly identified with their ethnic group (β = 0.775, p < 0.001; Figure 2). Moreover, a significant interaction effect emerged between PERD and ethnic identification on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' self-esteem. Yet, this association did not reach significance for low (1 SD < M) and high (1 SD > M) ethnic identifiers (Figure 3). Since – contrary to our expectation – we found that ethnic identification rather exacerbates the negative effect of PERD on adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms), Hypothesis 3 had to be rejected.

Concerning Hypothesis 4, a significant two-way interaction effect emerged between PERD and religious identification for self-esteem. Adolescents who experienced more ethno-religious discrimination and were highly identified with their religious group showed less self-esteem (β = -0.542, p = 0.013), while low religious identifiers showed more self-esteem (β = 0.396, p = 0.007; Figure 4). Since our results did not reveal religious identification as a protective factor buffering the negative effect of PERD on Muslim adolescents' adjustment, Hypothesis 4 also had to be rejected.

Concerning our control variables, girls showed more depressive symptoms than boys. Further, adolescents attending non-academic track secondary schools showed higher self-esteem and more disruptive behavior at school than those attending academic track secondary schools, and adolescents with higher SES revealed more disruptive behavior at school

compared to those with lower SES. No significant differences in Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' adjustment outcomes emerged for immigrant generation, refugee status and age.

Table 1

Results of the Structural Equation Models (N = 105)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Depressive symptoms	Self-esteem	Disruptive behavior at school	Depressive symptoms	Self-esteem	Disruptive behavior at school
Perceived ethno-religious discrimination at school	0.476***	- 0.154	0.169	0.426***	0.004	0.170
Ethnic identification	0.067	0.393***	0.205	0.056	0.356***	0.202
Religious identification	- 0.336***	0.148	- 0.146	- 0.270**	0.018	- 0.149
2-way interaction terms						
PERD at school X Ethnic identification				0.211*	- 0.205*	
PERD at school X Religious identification					- 0.272***	
Controls						
Immigrant Generation (1st generation)	- 0.039	0.090	- 0.069	- 0.032	- 0.003	- 0.074
Refugee Status (Refugee)	0.060	0.040	0.069	0.024	0.143	0.059

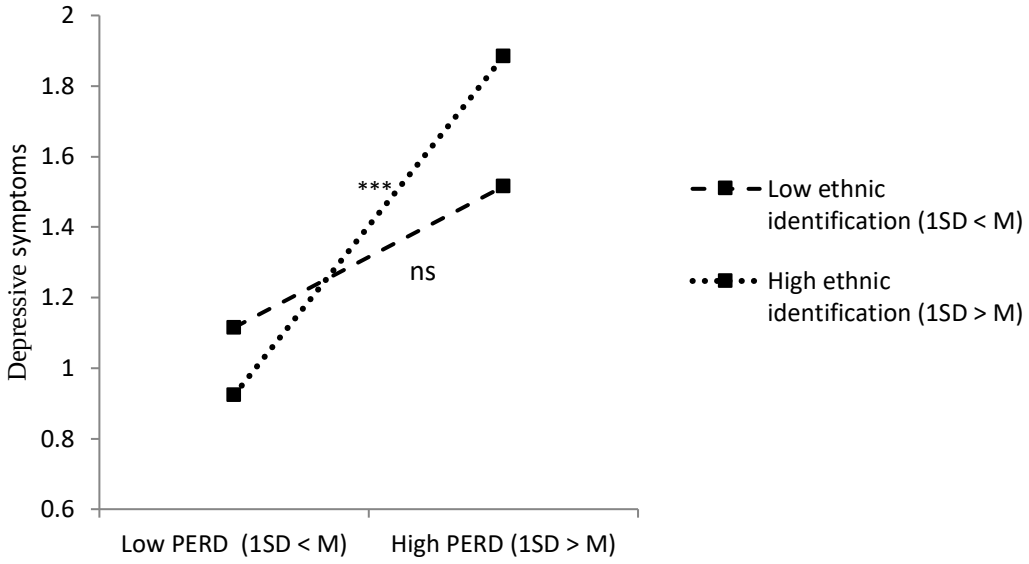
	Model 1			Model 2		
	Depressive symptoms	Self-esteem	Disruptive behavior at school	Depressive symptoms	Self-esteem	Disruptive behavior at school
Age	0.004	- 0.039	- 0.055	0.017	- 0.057	- 0.061
Gender (Female)	0.248*	- 0.011	0.050	0.266**	- 0.035	0.050
School track (Non-academic track secondary school)	- 0.007	0.296**	0.299*	0.005	0.286**	0.291*
Socioeconomic status	0.061	- 0.134	0.252**	0.101	- 0.159	0.254**
Variance						
R^2	0.354	0.382	0.221	0.323	0.398	0.213

Note. Standardized coefficients presented.

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, $^{\dagger}p < .10$.

Figure 2

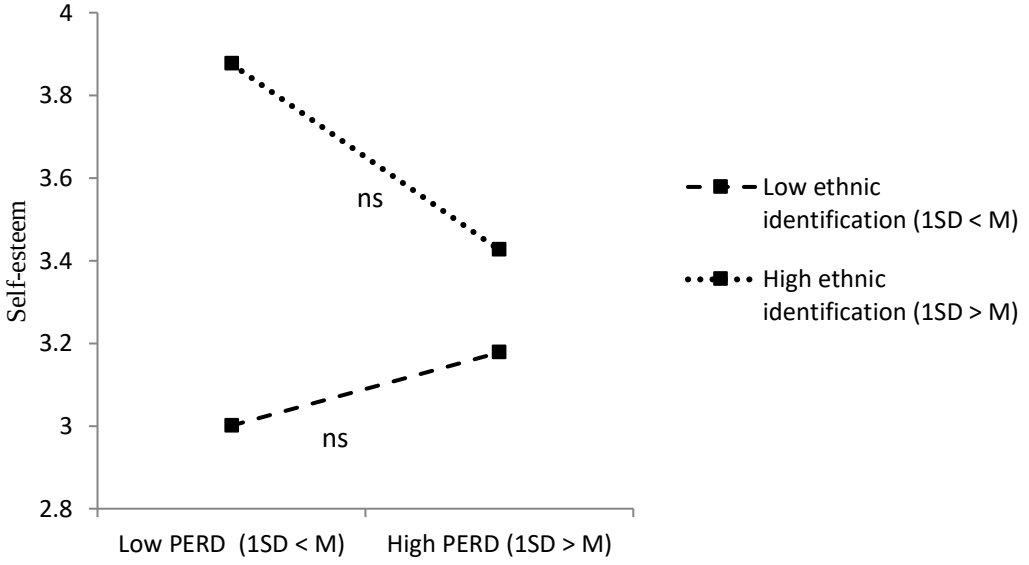
Effects of PERD on Muslim Adolescents' Depressive Symptoms Dependent on the Level of Ethnic Identification



Note. ***$p < .001$, ns = not significant.

Figure 3

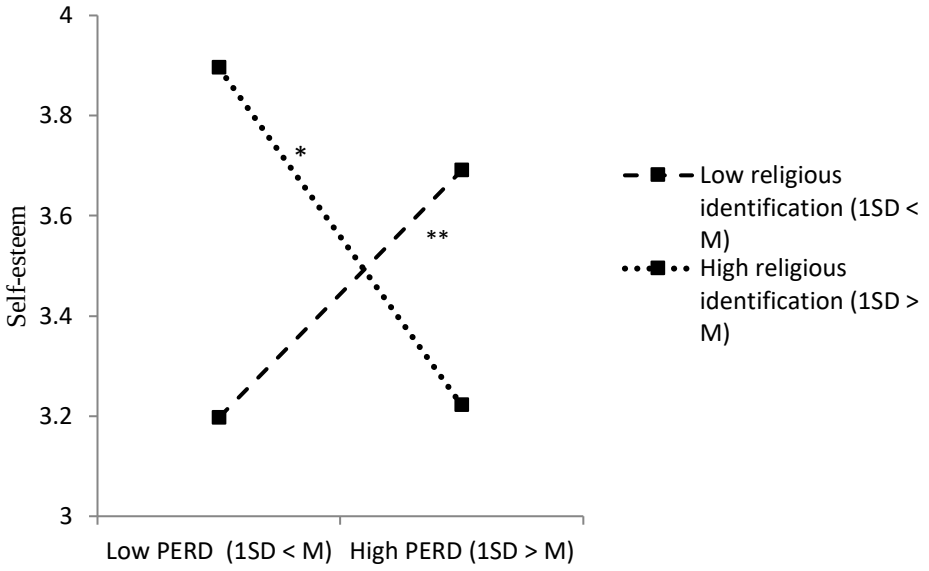
Effects of PERD on Muslim Adolescents' Self-esteem Dependent on the Level of Ethnic Identification



Note. ns = not significant.

Figure 4

Effects of PERD on Muslim adolescents' self-esteem dependent on the level of religious identification



Note. $^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$.

4.4 Discussion

With Islamophobia rising in Europe, this study examines the associations of ethnic and religious discriminatory experiences with Muslim minority adolescents psychological (i.e., depressive symptoms and self-esteem) and behavioral adjustment (i.e., disruptive behavior at school). In doing so, we consider the adolescents' ethnic and religious identification as two factors that may *promote* their adjustment and *protect* them from the negative consequences of discriminatory experiences.

Our study goes beyond existing research on ethnic discrimination and identity by also including religious discrimination and identity of Muslim minority adolescents. For the Muslim adolescents in our sample, PED and PRD mapped onto a joint construct of PERD, while ethnic and religious identification – as expected and found in previous research (Fleischmann et al., 2019) – remained separate. Thus, it seems that for discrimination experiences, it is hard for

Muslim adolescents to distinguish whether others discriminate on ethnic or religious grounds, whereas for their own identification this distinction between ethnicity and religion matters.

As expected, our findings suggest that PERD can harm while ethnic and religious identification can promote Muslim minority adolescents' psychological adjustment. Although PERD was unrelated to adolescents' self-esteem, we did find that those who experienced more PERD reported more depressive symptoms. Moreover, higher ethnic identifiers reported greater self-esteem, while higher religious identifiers showed fewer depressive symptoms. Thus, our findings are consistent with previous studies showing the harmful effects of discrimination (e.g., Benner et al., 2018) and the potential benefits of being highly committed to one's ethnic and/or religious group (e.g., Balkaya et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Identifying with their ethnic and religious groups can provide adolescents with a better sense of who they are, hence contributing to their psychological adjustment (e.g., Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Interestingly, PERD and ethnic and religious identification were related to the adolescents' psychological, but not to their behavioral adjustment in the form of disruptive behavior at school. This highlights the importance of distinguishing between different forms of adjustment. Regarding the relations between ethnic and religious identification and psychological adjustment (i.e., fewer depressive symptoms, greater self-esteem) our results are in accordance with previous research (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Balkaja et al., 2019). More research is needed to examine the mechanisms underlying these differential findings for behavioral and psychological adjustment.

Unexpectedly, beyond direct, promotive effects, we did not find that ethnic or religious identification protects the adolescents' adjustment in the face of PERD. On the contrary, high ethnic and high religious identifiers were found to be more vulnerable to experiences of PERD: Muslim adolescents identifying highly with their ethnic group reported more depressive symptoms and those identifying highly with their religious group reported lower self-esteem when experiencing PERD. One possible explanation could be that Muslim adolescents with

high ethnic/religious identification may be more sensitive to rejection due to higher investment in their ethnicity/religion (Yoo & Lee, 2008). For highly identified adolescents, their ethnic/religious group membership forms a larger, and probably more central part of the self. Consequently, PERD may present an increased attack on the self, resulting in higher feelings of hurt and more depressive symptoms. Ferrari and colleagues (2022) found similar results showing the exacerbating role of adoptive identity in the relation between international adoptees' experienced victimization and psychosocial adjustment. Future studies should research the mechanisms that can explain the exacerbating roles of ethnic and religious identification in the association between PERD and psychological adjustment.

Finally, Muslim adolescents with low religious identification showed higher self-esteem when experiencing higher PERD. In accordance with the rejection-sensitivity argument, it might be that those adolescents were less sensitive to PERD due to their low religious identification (Yoo & Lee, 2008). In addition, boosting self-reported and thus explicit self-esteem (Verkuyten, 2005) could be a coping mechanism for low religious identifiers when experiencing PERD. While high religious identifiers may experience PERD as an attack on the self, low religious identifiers may be better able to defy such experiences by displaying greater explicit self-esteem.

The present study should be considered in the light of some limitations. First, we used cross-sectional data and therefore could not provide evidence for causality. While only providing a snapshot in time; this makes identifying the directionality of complex relationships between variables such as PERD, ethnic and religious identification and adjustment difficult. In addition, individual endorsement of identities can fluctuate over time in response to various social and contextual cues. There are a handful of longitudinal studies, suggesting that perceived discrimination has deleterious effects on adolescents' adjustment (e.g., Galliher et al., 2011). Future studies should use longitudinal designs to replicate our findings and test for causality. As a second limitation, we acknowledge that the present study only used self-report

measures and a measure of PERD that only captured the frequency of different instances of discrimination but not their intensity. While in particular for measures of discrimination self-reports could reflect a coping mechanism (e.g. by under-reporting actual discrimination experiences), Muslim youth may have experienced similar instances of discrimination at school but in different intensities (Kaiser & Major, 2006). Upcoming studies should complement self-report measures with other methods to avoid such a minimization bias and measure also the intensity of discriminatory experiences. Moreover, in future studies, the relations between PERD, ethnic and religious identification and adjustment should be examined with a larger sample of participants to increase external validity and to minimize possible statistical flaws.

4.5 Conclusion

Besides confirming harmful effects of PERD on Muslim adolescents' adjustment, our findings show that both ethnic and religious identification can promote adjustment, but they can also make adolescents more vulnerable to experiences of ethno-religious discrimination. Thus, intervention programs at school should not only promote ethnic and religious identity development but simultaneously also prevent and tackle discrimination and stimulate respectful intergroup relationships. While helping adolescents to develop a clearer understanding about their identities, programs should also promote critical consciousness in order to make adolescents more aware of and resilient in the light of discrimination, as well as equipping them with strategies to combat discrimination (Mathews et al., 2020). One intervention program for schools that seeks to achieve this dual aim is the Identity Project, an intervention developed in the US which is currently being implemented and evaluated in five European countries (Juang et al., 2022). In its eight sessions, adolescents learn more about their own and others' identities and critically reflect about discrimination, stereotyping and racism. This can promote a climate of critical consciousness in the classroom, which may make students more resilient in the light of discrimination (Juang et al., 2020).

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4.7 Supplementary Material

Table S1

Items Measuring Perceived Ethno-Religious Discrimination at School and Ethnic and Religious Identification

Measure	Items
Perceived ethno-religious discrimination at school	My schoolmates laughed at me because I have a different heritage culture.
	My schoolmates laughed at me because I have a different religion.
	My schoolmates ignored me due to my heritage culture.
	My schoolmates ignored me due to my religion.
	I was teased by other students due to my heritage culture.
	I was teased by other students due to my religion.
	Other students were mean to me due to my heritage culture.
	Other students were mean to me due to my religion.
	I had to suffer verbal abuse because of my heritage culture.
	I had to suffer verbal abuse because of my religion.
Ethnic identification	I feel strongly attached to my ethnic group.
	I am glad to belong to my ethnic group.
	My ethnic group is dear to me.
Religious identification	I am satisfied to belong to my religion.
	I feel strongly attached to my religion.
	I am glad to belong to my religion.
	My religion is dear to me.
	I feel like I am part of my religion.

Table S2

Correlations Between Main Study Variables (N = 105)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived ethno-religious discrimination at school	--					
2. Ethnic identification	- 0.011	--				
3. Religious identification	0.080	0.563***	--			
4. Depressive symptoms	0.437***	- 0.016	- 0.136	--		
5. Self-esteem	- 0.088	0.475***	0.351***	- 0.273**	--	
6. Disruptive behavior at school	0.163	0.176†	- 0.056	0.200*	0.076	--

Note. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, $^{\dagger}p < .10$.

5 Study 4: Religious Identity Development and Psychological Adjustment Among Muslim Adolescents: Results from the *Identity Project* Intervention in Germany

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Abstract

Identity formation constitutes a key developmental process during adolescence. This study extends previous research on ethnic identity development by focusing on the religious identity development of Muslim youth in Germany. Using a longitudinal waitlist control group design, we tested if Muslim ethnic minority students ($N = 128$; $M_{age} = 13.43$, $SD_{age} = 0.84$, 43% female) who participated in an 8-week school-based intervention, the *Identity Project,* would show greater exploration of their religious identity, leading to increases in their religious identity resolution and in turn resulting in better psychological adjustment (i.e., higher self-esteem, less depressive symptoms) and higher global identity. Preliminary analyses revealed that Muslim youth in our sample are characterized by high religious identity during adolescence, represented by high values on religious identity exploration and resolution. Latent-change score models demonstrated that greater changes in Muslim youth's religious identity exploration predicted higher religious identity resolution, resulting in better self-acceptance and a higher sense of global identity. However, Muslim youth who showed a clear sense of their religious identity, did not indicate less affective and somatic depressive symptoms. We conclude that for Muslim youth religion seems to constitute an important part of their identity while promoting their positive adjustment. Our results indicate that multicultural approaches in schools – such as the *Identity Project* – should not only respond to students' ethnic identities but should also more explicitly cater to their religious identities.

Keywords: religious identity, Muslim ethnic minority youth, psychological adjustment, school, intervention

5.1 Introduction

During adolescence, youth go through a significant period of self-discovery and awareness, including their identification with specific social groups. In comparison to the copious research that exists on the role of ethnicity in youth's identity development, there has been relatively little work on the role of religion (e.g., King & Boyatzis, 2004; Lopez et al., 2011). However, ethnic and religious identities are often seen as intertwined (e.g., Güngör et al., 2012; Hutchinson & Smith, 1996), particularly in communities where a specific religion is closely linked to a particular ethnic group. Still, ethnic members may not necessarily feel attached to religion, and religious individuals within a given ethnicity may not psychologically endorse their ethnic identification (Fleischmann et al., 2019; Ysseldyk, 2010). Thus, it is important to also examine the process of religious identity development among youth next to their ethnic identity. So far studies in Europe have focused on ethnic identity development among youth (e.g., Karataş et al., 2023) but rarely included the development of religious identity and its role for youth's adjustment.

Especially for ethnic minority youth[1] their religious identity can act as a promotive and protective factor regarding their adjustment, e.g., when experiencing discrimination (Tineo et al., 2021). Given the rising prevalence of Islamophobia in Germany and thus the great risk for Muslim youth and those perceived to be Muslim to experience identity-based harassment, achieving a strong and sustained religious identity is pivotal for Muslim ethnic minority youth's adjustment and well-being (Phalet et al., 2018). However, most research on religious identity development in Europe is limited to majority Christian adolescents (e.g., Bertram-Troost et al., 2007), and the few longitudinal studies of ethnic minority youth focus on ethnic – rather than religious – identity development (Juang et al., 2020; Phalet et al., 2018).

[1] We use the term Muslim ethnic minority youth to refer to adolescents who self-identified as Muslims, have at least one foreign-born parent and either have been born outside (first generation) or within (second generation) Germany.

In this study, we specifically explore the effects of a school-based intervention (i.e., the *Identity Project*) in which, through the stimulation of identity exploration processes, youth are prompted to develop a clear sense of their own ethnic-racial identity, resulting in better psychological adjustment. The *Identity Project* was first developed and successfully tested in the US (Sladek et al., 2018; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017a; 2017b), before it was adapted to the European context (Juang et al., 2022; 2020). The project's conceptual model is grounded in developmental theory (Erikson, 1968), which posits that a clear sense of one's identity (referred to as resolution) is achieved through a thorough process of self-examination (known as exploration) and provides individuals with increased self-confidence, resilience and other psychosocial advantages that ultimately foster adjustment. These theoretical assumptions were extended to the domain of ethnic-racial identity when developing the *Identity Project*. Thus, the program aims to support adolescents in their ethnic identity formation while fostering a classroom atmosphere that embraces diversity (Umaña-Taylor & Douglas, 2017).

This study aimed to test the efficacy of the German version of the *Identity Project*, while focusing on the development of Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' religious identity formation in addition to their ethnic identity. It extends previous research (e.g., Ceccon et al., 2023; Schachner et al., 2023; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017b) in four ways, namely by (a) specifically focusing on the development of religious identity; (b) using a longitudinal intervention design to examine the development of religious identity over time; (c) including ethnic and religious discrimination as possible initiators for the religious identity development process; and (d) focusing on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents, for whom the development of a stable and protective religious identity can be particularly important due to rising Islamophobia and thus identity-based discrimination in Europe.

Religious Identity Development as a Promotive Factor for Adjustment and Global Identity

According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972), a social identity is defined as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some value or emotional significance to him of his group membership" (p. 272). Given the wide range of social groups, adolescents have the possibility to develop numerous social identities. While much research on social identity has focused on ethnic identity development among youth, less research examined the role of religious identity development. In their review, King and Boyatzis (2015) found that most research so far mostly included adolescents in the US and did not focus on the interplay of religion and migration. Similarly, Suárez-Orozco and colleagues (2011) stated that in developmental studies of adaptation and adjustment, the role of religious identity for youth of immigrant descent has been neglected. Indeed, most research on religious identity development is limited to majority Christian adolescents (e.g., Bertram-Troost et al., 2007), while research among Muslim ethnic minority youth is relatively rare (for a review, see, e.g., Phalet et al., 2018). Especially, the process of religious identity development and its role for Muslim ethnic minority youth's adjustment is unclear.

Religious and ethnic group attachments form distinct but related self-identities in Muslim adolescents (Phalet et al., 2018). While Fleischmann and colleagues (2019) showed that Muslim youth do distinguish in their self-identification between their religious and ethnic group membership, a study by Güngör and colleagues (2012) demonstrated that more strongly ethnically identified Muslim-Belgian youth were also more strongly committed to their religious identity. In addition, religious identity was associated with heritage culture maintenance and cultural values of interdependence, such as tradition, conformity and benevolence (Saroglou et al., 2004). Taking these results into consideration and focusing on the distinct facet of religious identity, this study aims to clarify if Muslim ethnic minority youth

develop their religious identity similarly to the process which was examined for ethnic identity development in previous studies (Juang et al., 2020).

In his developmental theory (1968), Erikson indicated that having a clear sense of one's identity provides adolescents with a *sense of inner identity*, knowing who they *were*, who they *are*, and who they *can become*. In addition, Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980) argued that adolescents' optimal form of identity development requires an achieved sense of clarity (i.e., resolution) via an extensive process of search, observation and consideration (i.e., exploration). Grounded in Erikson's and Marcia's work and previous theoretical and empirical work on ethnic-racial identity and youth adjustment (e.g., Rivas-Drake et al., 2014; Umaña-Taylor, 2011), Umaña-Taylor and Douglass (2017) developed the *Identity Project* intervention. While targeting adolescents' ethnic-racial identity exploration and their resolution, the project encourages youth in their ethnic-racial identity development that in turn can result in higher global identity cohesion and psychosocial functioning (e.g., higher self-esteem, lower depressive symptoms).

Research on religious identity development among ethnic minority youth is rare. However, Peek (2005) revealed three stages of religious identity development (namely: religion as ascribed identity, religion as chosen identity, and religion as declared identity) in her study with Muslim students in the US and Goforth and colleagues (2014) found religious identity as a source of psychological well-being and self-worth among Muslim American minority adolescents. In addition, research from Europe found that Muslim-Belgian adolescents with a global identity status of achievement (vs. exploration) were most committed to their religious identity (Saraglou & Galand, 2004). These findings raise the question, if next to ethnic identity also religious identity development among Muslim ethnic minority youth in Germany can be fostered with the *Identity Project* intervention, resulting in better psychosocial adjustment and higher global identity resolution.

Perceived Ethnic and Religious Discrimination as Initiating Factors for Religious Identity Development

According to the rejection-identification model (RIM, Branscombe et al., 1999), perceptions of pervasive discrimination against an ingroup can lead to increased identification with that ingroup. Thus, perceiving ethnic and/or religious discrimination may prompt Muslim youth to turn toward their ethnic and/or religious group. Research amongst U.S. college students examined Muslim identity as a protective factor in the relationship between discriminatory experiences and adjustment (Tineo et al., 2021). However, what has received less attention, is the process of religious identity development initiated when experiencing ethnic and/or religious discrimination. While Meca and colleagues (2020) have found that Latino adolescents in the US who reported higher ethnic discrimination, reported higher levels of ethnic identity exploration one year later, research that also encompasses religious identity development and focuses on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents is rare. Guided by the RIM model (Branscombe et al., 1999), Erikson's developmental theory (1968) and previous theoretical and empirical work by Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2011; 2017), we expected that for Muslim youth perceiving higher ethnic and/or religious discrimination may result in higher religious identity resolution, mediated via more religious identity exploration.

The Identity Project and its Adaptation in Germany

As a school-based intervention, the *Identity Project* has the aim to support adolescents' individual ethnic-racial identity development, while offering eight weekly sessions involving developmentally appropriate activities. The sessions are designed to enable youth to engage critically with issues of ethnic, racial and cultural diversity (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017) and to examine their cultural heritage and traditions. By engaging in collective discussions with their classmates and active reflections with the facilitators, adolescents learn more about their classmates' backgrounds and identities. Difficult topics such as stereotyping, prejudice and

discrimination are addressed (e.g., discovering stories of past and present discrimination based on real-life events) by creating a safe and structured learning opportunity (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017). While gaining a sense of clarity regarding the role of race and ethnicity in their overall sense of self through a process of exploration and reflection, youth are prompted to develop a greater sense of global identity resolution, resulting in better psychological adjustment (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017a, 2017b).

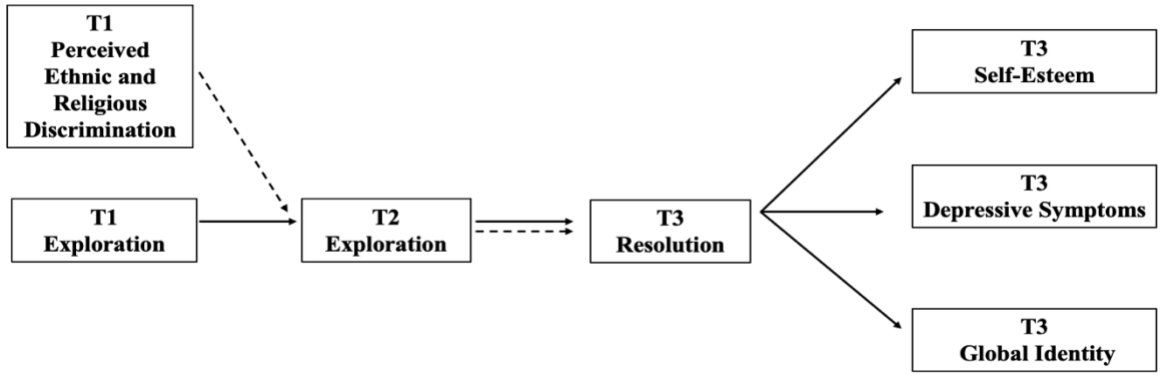
When adapting the program to the German context, the key term *ethnic-racial identity* was changed to *heritage culture identity* or *cultural identity* (Juang et al., 2022) to acknowledge sociocultural variations in understandings of ethnicity, race, and culture. Being referred to as a facet of the students' heritage culture, religion was addressed in multiple sessions throughout the intervention, including different tasks and discussion engaging the students to learn more and reflect about religion and religious traditions and rituals. The German adaptation was first carried out in Berlin (Juang et al., 2020) and then received further adaptations for the context of Halle (Saxony-Anhalt) (Schachner et al., 2023). While Berlin already constitutes a multicultural city for centuries, Halle registered a more recent increase in cultural diversity with the arrival of refugees starting in 2015. This is also reflected by the different proportions of students of immigrant descent in the two cities (Berlin: 50%, Halle: 13%). To address these two different contexts, the *Identity Project* was adapted slightly differently. Specifically, for the context of Halle, discussions on national and local identities were added to address the high proportion of students of non-immigrant descent while emphasizing that one's cultural identity is not only based on one's heritage but also on national or regional cultures. This ensured inclusiveness and the relevance of the intervention for all students while simultaneously reinforcing diversity in who is German.

The Present Study

The present study builds on results by Umaña-Taylor and colleagues (2017a, 2017b), which demonstrated the efficacy of the *Identity Project* for adolescents in the US, by increasing their ethnic identity exploration and resolution, resulting in higher global identity resolution and psychosocial adjustment. This study aimed to apply the findings of Umaña-Taylor et al. (2017a, 2017b), by focusing on Muslim ethnic minority adolescents in Germany and their religious identity development. Thus, we hypothesized that Muslim adolescents in the intervention group compared to the control group would show an increase in religious identity exploration at T2 which would produce increases in religious identity resolution and would result in better psychosocial adjustment (i.e., less depressive symptoms and higher self-esteem) and higher global identity resolution at T3 (*H1*; see Figure 1). Further, we expected that Muslim youth who perceive higher discrimination (i.e., ethnic and religious discrimination) at T1 will show higher religious identity resolution at T3, which would be mediated by increases in religious identity exploration at T2 (*H2*). Deviating from our pre-registration (https://osf.io/u7rwz/) and due to the small sample size with a simultaneous high model complexity, we did not separate Muslim adolescents in the intervention and control group when testing our second hypothesis.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Sequential Model for H1 and H2



Note. This figure demonstrates the hypothesized sequential model from T1 religious identity exploration, via T2 religious identity exploration to T3 religious identity resolution, global identity resolution and better psychosocial adjustment (i.e., higher self-esteem, less depressive symptoms) (H1, solid lines) and hypothesized association between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at T1, T2 religious identity exploration and T3 religious identity resolution (H2, dashed lines).

By estimating the sequential model for H1, group membership (intervention vs. control group) was accounted for.

5.2 Materials and Methods

Participants and Procedure

During school recruitment, the *Identity Project* was presented to interested principals and/or 7th grade teachers, targeting schools with a high level of cultural diversity in Halle as well as one school which had collaborated with the research team previously in Berlin. Once school principals agreed to participate, ethical approval was obtained for the participating schools from the Berlin Education Senate, as well as the State Board of Education of Saxony-Anhalt. The *Identity Project* was then presented to 7th grade students' parents at parent evenings, the informed consent form was shared, and any questions answered. All students of

participating classes took part in the project as it was part of the regular curriculum; however, students whose parents denied consent for participation in the accompanying research study did not fill in the survey. Participation in the study was voluntary, i.e., students could decide not to take part in the survey even if their parents had consented and could also withdraw from the study at any time.

Our sample comprised N = 128 Muslim ethnic minority students (M_{age} = 13.43, SD_{age} = 0.84; 43% female). Students were asked about their age, gender, birthplace, parents' birthplace, their heritage culture and religious self-identification. While adolescents self-identified as Muslim, they had at least one foreign-born parent and were born outside (first generation, 69.5%) or within (second generation, 30.5%) Germany. Participants who were born outside Germany, primarily stated Syria (59.4%), Somalia (3.1%), Afghanistan (3.1%) and Kosovo (3.1%) as their country of birth. Of these adolescents, 38.3% indicated to have left their home country because of persecution, fear of violent conflicts and/or war. Therefore, they were considered refugees (United nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951). Regarding their heritage culture, participants primarily self-identified as Syrian (25%), Russian (18.8%), German-Polish (18.8%), and Kurdish (9.4%). Regarding the question how important a religious affiliation is in their family, 49.6% of participants answered with *extremely important*, 26.1% answered *very important,* 14.8% *important,* 3.1% *not so important,* 0.8% *not important at all* and 5.6% of participants did not provide information.

Data collection took place across 18 classrooms in six culturally diverse schools in Halle (Saale) (n = 375) and Berlin (n = 26), Germany. Seven classrooms participated from non-academic track secondary[2] schools, seven from comprehensive secondary schools, and four

[2] The German school system distinguishes between different secondary school forms: (1) non-academic track secondary schools, (2) academic track secondary schools, and (3) comprehensive secondary schools. Non-academic track schools offer courses of education leading to the final examination *Hauptschulabschluss*, after grade 9; and to the *Mittlere Reife*, after grade 10. Academic track schools offer courses leading to the final examination *Abitur*, after grade 12 or 13. Comprehensive schools combine the aforementioned school forms by offering courses leading to all three final examinations.

from academic track secondary schools. We conducted the intervention in the academic year of 2021-2022. Taking organizational constraints into account, teachers were asked if they wanted the intervention implemented with their class at the beginning (intervention group) or end of the school year (waitlist control group). We also ensured that intervention and control classes were balanced within schools as much as possible, arriving at a final distribution of nine classrooms each in intervention and control group. Three classrooms from the control group only filled out the questionnaires but did not take part in the intervention. Muslim ethnic minority students in the intervention (n = 70) and control group (n = 58) did not differ significantly in age ($t(116.493) = -1.87$, $p = .07$), gender ($\chi^2(1) = 1.48$, $p = .23$), refugee status ($\chi^2(1) = 0.10$, $p = .76$), generational status ($\chi^2(1) = 0.91$, $p = .34$) and socioeconomic status ($t(119.333) = -0.69$, $p = .50$).

The Identity Project was implemented by two moderators per class, from a team of 26 pre-service teachers, trained teachers, members of the research team and other educational professionals who were paid for their work in schools. We aimed to create diverse moderator pairs as much as possible, always pairing up one member of an ethnically minoritized group, some with a refugee experience, and one member of the ethnically majoritized group, as well male and female. Prior to the implementation at schools, moderators participated in a two-day training to get familiar with the project and practiced sessions with the research team. During the implementation period, moderator teams met weekly before each session to prepare them together. During each session, one observer was present, who completed fidelity checklists to ensure that material was covered consistently. A review of the fidelity checklists showed that for most sessions all topics were covered. If not, moderators aimed to continue with the topic at the beginning of the next session. In addition, one teacher was present during most *Identity Project* sessions.

If students had comprehension and/ or language-related questions when filling out the questionnaire, at least one research assistant was available to help them. Data were collected one week prior to the start of the intervention (T1), and 1 week (T2) and 8 weeks (T3) after the intervention. Surveys were filled out during 90 minutes slots of regular class time. Students were given small gifts (e.g., erasers or chocolate) for compensation. The control group received regular teaching content mostly in the subject of ethics between T1 and T2 and received the intervention one week after T3 data collection.

Measures

Religious Identity Exploration and Resolution

Following the Ethnic Identity Scale-Brief (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015) to assess ethnic-racial identity exploration and resolution, we created parallel items for religious identity exploration and resolution. Items were measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of all items at T1 revealed a three-item structure each for religious identity exploration and resolution. While the three-item exploration subscale assessed how much individuals had explored their religion (e.g., "I have participated in activities that have taught me about my religion"; $\alpha_{t1/t2}$ = .78/.87 and $\omega_{t1/t2}$ = .79/.84), the three-item resolution subscale assessed to which degree individuals had clarity about their religious identity (e.g., " I am clear about what my religion means to me"; α_{t3} = .85 and ω_{t3} = .85)[3]. Both, a two-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) based on T2 data ($\chi^2(15)$ = 166.662, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.000 [0.000, 0.108]; CFI = 1.000; TLI =1.008; SRMR = 0.036) and a two-factor CFA based on T3 data ($\chi^2(15)$ = 177.926, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.069 [0.000, 0.147]; CFI = 0.977; TLI = 0.956; SRMR = 0.036) revealed acceptable model fit[4].

[3] Reliability was accessed with Cronbach's Alpha (α) and McDonald's Omega (ω).
[4] Model fit was evaluated with Chi-square ($p > .05$), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > .90), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI > .90), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < .08), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residuals

Perceived Ethno-Religious Discrimination

We used six items by Titzmann and colleagues (2011) for ethnic discrimination (e.g., "My schoolmates laughed at me because I have a different heritage culture"), while formulating six parallel items for religious discrimination (e.g., "My schoolmates laughed at me because I have a different religion"). Adolescents responded on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*more than 10 times*). Based on previous findings by Wenzing et al. (2023), we treated the two scales as a single 10-item scale measuring *perceived ethno-religious discrimination* (PERD; α_{t1} = .90 and ω_1 = .90). A one-factor CFA based on T1 data revealed an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2(66)$ =353.556, p < .001; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.023 [0.012, 0.039]; CFI = 0.926; TLI = 0.883; SRMR = 0.015).

Psychological Adjustment

We measured psychological adjustment in forms of self-esteem and the extent to which participants reported depressive symptoms. We assessed self-esteem in terms of *self-acceptance* (two items; e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") and *self-depreciation* (five items; e.g., "At times I think I am no good at all") with a total of seven items of the revised German version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Collani & Herzberg, 2003; Rosenberg, 1965). Items were measured on a 4-point Likert-scale from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 4 *(strongly agree)*. However, when checking reliability, the two scales showed low values of Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega (Self-acceptance: α_{t3} = .53 and ω_{t3} = .53; Self-depreciation: α_{t3} = .62 and ω_{t3} = .62). Therefore, we decided to delete three items[5] of the original scale to improve reliability (self-acceptance: α_{t3} = .63 and ω_{t3} = .63; self-depreciation: α_{t3} = .78 and ω_{t3} = .78). A

(SRMR < .08) (Byrne, 2012; Hu & Bentler, 1999). In addition, a 90% confidence interval (CI) for the RMSEA was examined, whereby model fit can be considered acceptable if the upper bound of the CI is lower than .10 (Chen et al., 2008).

[5] The following three items were deleted: "I feel that I have a number of good qualities.", "I am able to do things as well as most other people.", I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others."

two-factor CFA based on T3 data revealed an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2(21) = 119.377$, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.061 [0.000, 0.123]; CFI = 0.950; TLI = 0.919; SRMR = 0.061).

Depressive symptoms were measured with two dimensions, relating to *affect* and *body*, respectively. For affective depression symptoms (six items; e.g. "I felt sad"; $\alpha_{t3} = .88$ and $\omega_{t3} = .87$) and somatic depression symptoms (four items, e.g., "My appetite was poor"; $\alpha_{t3} = .73$ and $\omega_{t3} = .74$), items of the German version (Kohlmann & Gerbershagen, 2006) of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) were used. The two-factor structure was confirmed with a CFA based on T3 data ($\chi^2(45) = 348.080$, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.000 [0.000, 0.071]; CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.002; SRMR = 0.043).

Global Identity Resolution

Global identity resolution was measured by asking the adolescents how definite they are about themselves and their lives in general. Eight items of the identity resolution subscale of the Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory (Rosenthal et al., 1981) were used. Adolescents answered the items on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 *(strongly agree)*. While three of the items were negatively worded, they correlated poorly with the other items even after recoding. We deleted these three items and retained the five positively worded items (e.g., "The important things in life are clear to me"; $\alpha_{t3} = .83$ and $\omega_{t3} = .82$). A one-factor CFA based on T3 data revealed an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2(10) = 98.591$, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.106 [0.00, 0.223]; CFI = 0.960; TLI = 0.919; SRMR = 0.079).

Control Variables

Gender (0 = boys ,1 = girls), *immigrant generation* (0 = second generation, 1 = first generation) and *socioeconomic status* (SES) were included as statistical controls in our models. The SES of adolescents was assessed with the Family Affluence Scale (FAS; Boyce et al., 2006), which was validated in Germany by Richter and Leppin (2007). Four items ask about (1) whether the family has a car (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes, one*, or 2 = *yes, two or more*); (2) whether the

child has his or her own room at home (0 = *no* or 1 = *yes*); (3) how often the family went on vacation in the past year (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *once*, 2 = *twice*, or 3 = *three times or more*); and (4) the number of computers at home (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes, one*, 2 = *yes, two* or 3 = *yes, three or more*). We combined the SES items by performing a principal components analysis and used the factor loadings in our final models (see Batista-Foguet et al., 2004).

5.3 Results

Preliminary Results

As a first step, Mardia's test to evaluate multivariate normality was conducted. Results indicated a violation of multivariate normality for all scales. Subsequently, Maximum Likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (MLR) was used in model testing. As a next step, missing value analysis by using Little's Missing Completely at Random test (MCAR; Little, 1988) was conducted. MCAR test revealed no indication of systematic missing data (χ^2 (1792) = 1771.11, p = .633). Therefore, we decided to include all participants in our analyses and to use Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) to effectively make use of all available information while accommodating missing values (Enders, 2010).

Means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), ranges and bivariate correlations between the main study variables are shown in Table 1. In both, intervention and control group, Muslim youth already showed high values on religious identity exploration ($M_{\text{intervention}}$ = 3.16, *SD* = 0.83; M_{control} = 2.84, *SD* = 0.97) and resolution ($M_{\text{intervention}}$ = 3.55, *SD* = 0.60; M_{control} = 3.67, *SD* = 0.58) at T1. Mean level differences between intervention and control group for the key constructs at T1 were examined using Welch's t-test (Rasch et al., 2008; Welch, 1947), showing no significant differences on any of our outcomes: religious identity exploration (t(86,087) = -1.72, p = .09), religious identity resolution (t (95,584) = 0.96, p = .34), perceived ethno-religious discrimination (t(97,94) = 1.09, p = .28), self-esteem (self-acceptance: t(92,81) = 0.23, p = .82; self-depreciation: t(98,00) = 1.46, p = .15), depressive symptoms (affective: t(94,05) = -1.57, p

= .12; somatic: $t(92,31) = -1.68$, $p = .10$) and global identity resolution ($t(97,90) = 0.16$, $p = .87$). Also, no significant correlations between PERD and the other study variables were revealed.

Table 1

Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables by Group (intervention n =70, control n = 58)

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1.	T1 religious identity exploration	1	.478***	.279	.150	.191	-.252	.050	.141	.081
2.	T2 religious identity exploration	.385*	1	.479***	.270	.358	.048	.171	.105	.185
3.	T3 religious identity resolution	.024	.235	1	.313*	.454***	.080	.509***	-.152	.058
4.	T1 PERD	.183	.244	.002	1	-.127	.290	.236	.193	.209
5.	T3 Self-esteem (self-acceptance)	-.024	.006	.294*	-.010	1	-.223	.233	-.214	-.143
6.	T3 Self-esteem (self-depreciation)	-.087	.019	.290	.134	-.336*	1	-.158	.372**	.329*
7.	T3 Global identity resolution	.048	.015	.425**	.099	.425**	-.449**	1	-.055	.037
8.	T3 Depressive symptoms (affective)	-.028	.161	-.055	.127	-.479***	.454**	-.147	1	.808***
9.	T3 Depressive symptoms (somatic)	-.044	.273	.046	.108	-.511***	.468**	-.298*	.815***	1
	Range	1 – 4	1 – 4	1 – 4	1 – 5	1 – 4	1 – 4	1 – 5	1 – 4	1 – 4
	Intervention	3.16	3.18	3.54	1.39	3.12	2.92	3.93	1.74	1.79
	M (SD)	(0.83)	(0.96)	(0.60)	(0.61)	(0.73)	(0.68)	(0.97)	(0.76)	(0.72)
	Control	2.84	3.14	3.72	1.27	3.08	2.70	4.04	1.83	1.94
	M (SD)	(0.97)	(0.84)	(0.43)	(0.46)	(0.86)	(0.76)	(0.76)	(0.82)	(0.86)

Note. Correlations are presented for the intervention group (above the diagonal) and the control (below the diagonal). T1 = pretest, T2 = 1-week posttest, T3 = 8-week posttest. PERD = Perceived Ethno-Religious Discrimination. Welch's t-test did not reveal any significant mean level differences between the intervention and control group. $^{***}p < .001$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{\dagger}p < .10$.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1

To test if the *Identity Project* intervention would show longer-term effects on Muslim youth's psychological adjustment (H1), we performed a sequential path model to test direct and indirect effects. However, the model indicated a suboptimal fit to the data, as evidenced by non-acceptable model fit indices ($\chi^2(218) = 752.421$, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = .263 [0.132, 0.340]; CFI = .095; TLI = .037; SRMR = .134). This might be likely due to high model complexity and the relatively small sample size. To reduce model complexity, we decided to estimate the changes in religious identity exploration from before to after the intervention (i.e., T1 and T2) in a latent change score variable. This way, it may be possible to capture potential increases and/or decreases and to address whether and how the changes in youth's religious identity exploration might be associated over time with religious identity resolution at T3 that might in turn be linked to psychological adjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms and self-esteem) and global identity resolution at T3.

Accordingly, we initially performed *Latent Change Score Models* (Geiser, 2020) in M*plus* 8 (Muthen & Muthen, 2012-2018) to model a latent change score variable in youth's religious identity exploration. In a next step, the path from the latent change score variable to T3 religious identity resolution was tested, which might, in turn, be associated with dependent variables at T3 (i.e., self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and global identity resolution). In each model, we used bias-corrected bootstrap with 1000 bootstrap sample draws to obtain unbiased confidence intervals for the hypothesized effects. To further reduce model complexity, we did not include the intervention variable as a potential moderator, but as a covariate in each model. In addition, we controlled for gender, generational status and SES.

All models showed acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; see Table 2). When investigating self-esteem as our dependent variable (Model 1a; see Figure 2a), change in adolescents'

religious identity exploration was positively linked to T3 self-acceptance through T3 religious identity resolution. In other words, while adolescents' religious identity exploration significantly increased over time, they reported higher religious identity resolution at T3 (B = 0.540, p < .001, 95% CI [0.302, 0.776]). The latter was in turn positively associated with adolescents' self-acceptance (B = 0.492, p < .001, 95% CI [0.141, 0.820]). On the contrary, we did not find a significant relation between religious identity resolution and Muslim youth's self-depreciation at T3. Same as for self-acceptance, the hypothesized model was confirmed with global identity resolution (Model 1b; see Figure 2b). Students, whose religious identity exploration significantly increased over time, reported higher religious identity resolution at T3 (B = 0.544, p < .001, 95% CI [0.110, 0.741]), which in turn was associated with higher global identity resolution at T3 (B = 0.676, p < .001, 95% CI [0.436, 0.923]). With respect to affective and somatic depressive symptoms, change in adolescents' religious identity exploration was significantly liked to T3 religious identity resolution (Model 1c; see Figure 2c). Muslim students, whose religious identity exploration significantly increased over time, showed higher religious identity resolution at T3 (B = 0.568, p < .001, 95% CI [0.284, 0.806]). No significant associations were found between T3 religious identity resolution and T3 affective and somatic depressive symptoms.

Concerning our control variables, girls showed more affective (B = 0.333, p = .003, 95% CI [0.19, 0.545]) and somatic (B = 0.427, p < .001, 95% CI [0.285, 0.613]) depressive symptoms at T3 than boys. No significant differences were observed regarding Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' change in religious identity exploration, religious identity resolution, and psychological adjustment outcomes based on immigrant generation and SES. In addition, being in the intervention or control group did not reveal significant differences regarding Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' change in religious identity exploration, religious identity resolution, and psychological adjustment outcomes.

Hypothesis 2

To test our second hypothesis (*H2*), we included PERD in our sequential path model, checking if higher PERD at T1 might be related to higher religious identity resolution at T3, mediated by increases in religious identity exploration at T2 (Model 2a). In line with our latent change score modelling procedure, we also examined if higher PERD at T1 might be related to higher changes in Muslim youth's religious identity exploration over time, which in turn might be associated with higher religious identity resolution at T3 (Model 2b). However, both models revealed a non-acceptable model fit (Model 2a: $\chi^2(225) = 849.083$, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.100 [0.087, 0.113]; CFI = 0.647; TLI = 0.586; SRMR = 0.136; Model 2b: $\chi^2(262) = 527.960$, $p < .001$; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.091 [0.080 0.102]; CFI = 0.646; TLI = 0.603; SRMR = 0.134) Consequently, H2 could not be tested.

Table 2

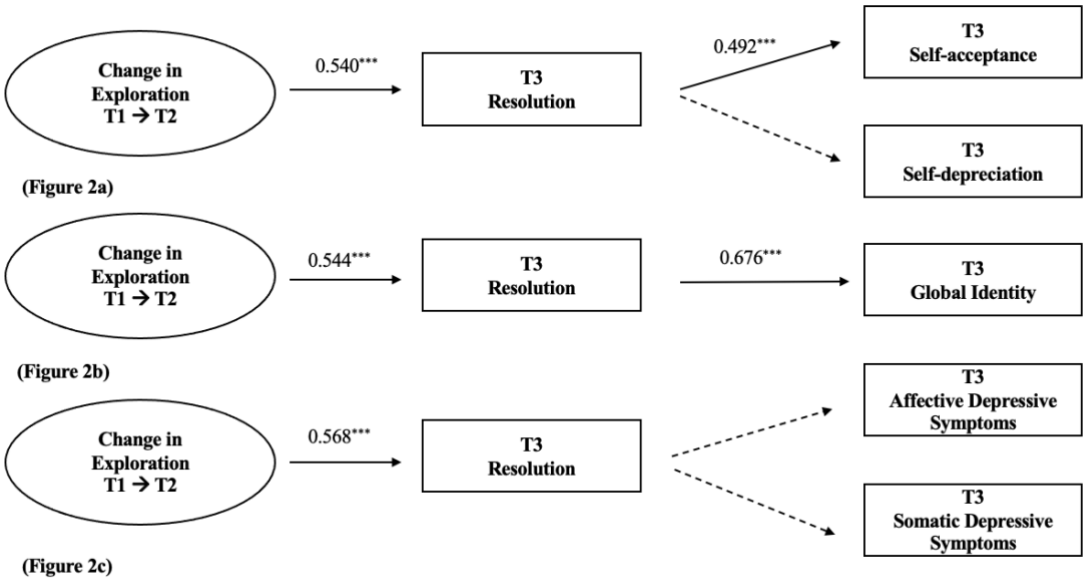
Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Latent Chance Score Models (N = 128)

Model	$\chi^2(df)$	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR
Model 1a: Self-esteem	716.714 (184)	< .001	.911	.890	.051 [0.029, 0.069]	.089
Model 1b: Global Identity Resolution	821.554 (204)	< .001	.831	.805	.069 [0.054, 0.084]	.096
Model 1c: Depressive symptoms	1130.993 (247)	< .001	.910	.895	.055 [0.039, 0.070]	.084

Note. df = degrees of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean square Residuals.

Figure 2

Sequential Model Results



Note. This figure demonstrates the sequential model results from the latent change score variable for exploration (T1 → T2) to T3 religious identity resolution, self-acceptance/self-depreciation (Figure 2a), global identity resolution (Figure 2b) and affective depressive symptoms/somatic depressive symptoms (Figure 2c).

Standardized estimates are presented. Gender, generational status, SES and intervention were controlled for. Solid lines indicate significant effects, dashed lines indicate nonsignificant effects.

***$p < .001$.

5.4 Discussion

This study examined whether Muslim ethnic minority youth in Germany, who participated in the *Identity Project* intervention, would show higher religious identity exploration and resolution, resulting in better psychological adjustment (i.e., self-esteem and depressive symptoms) and higher global identity resolution. In addition, we considered Muslim youth's perceived ethno-religious discrimination as an initial factor that could trigger a

rejection-identification response, resulting in higher religious identity resolution via a faster growth of their religious identity exploration.

By specifically focusing on Muslim youth's religious identity development and its longitudinal effects on psychological adjustment and global identity, our study goes behind existing research on ethnic identity development. When testing our sequential mediation hypothesis (*H1*), Muslim ethnic minority youth whose religious identity exploration significantly increased over time (from T1 to T2) reported higher religious identity resolution at T3. As expected, higher religious identity resolution was associated with better psychological adjustment (i.e., higher self-acceptance) and global identity resolution. Thus, and in line with Erikson's theory on identity development (1968) and results of previous studies (Goforth et al., 2014; Saraglou & Galand, 2004), it seems that Muslim youth's religious identity develops similarly to their ethnic identity (Juang et al. 2020; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017a; 2017b) and is associated with youth having a better sense of who they are and showing better psychological adjustment. Interestingly, Muslim youth with a higher religious identity resolution did not show less affective and somatic depressive symptoms. One possible explanation could be that Muslim youth possess additional resources, which already promote their psychological adjustment in forms of less affective and somatic depressive symptoms. For example, Stuart and Ward (2008) found religious practices, as attending the mosque and reading the Quran, to act as an important resource, reducing depression among Muslim youth in New Zealand. Future studies should examine which resources Muslim youth in Germany possess to reduce depressive symptoms and if religious practices constitute such a health-promoting resource.

Due to our small sample size and to reduce model complexity, we did not include the intervention variable as a potential moderator but as a covariate in each model. Future studies with a bigger sample are needed to test the hypothesized intervention effect. For example, the

performance of multi-group analyses would allow to investigate possible differences between the intervention and control group regarding the hypothesized sequential model.

However, being in the intervention or control group did not reveal significant differences regarding Muslim ethnic minority adolescents' change in religious identity exploration and religious identity resolution. In addition, no significant mean level differences between Muslim youth in the intervention group and in the control group were revealed. Phalet and colleagues (2018) stated that minority youth in general and Muslim youth in particular seem to be more religious than their majority peers. This might be reasoned with the adaptive function of religious identity development, for example, helping Muslim youth to cope with discriminatory experiences and acculturative stress. Thus, the insignificant effect of being in the intervention group and the insignificant mean level differences may be a result of Muslim youth's already high developed religious identity at T1. Alternatively, the intervention sessions might not have stimulated the youth's religious identity development in a sufficient manner. Although the sessions included many references to religious traditions and rituals, they were presented as facets of students' heritage culture rather than part of their religion. Thus, specifically for youth for whom religion constitutes an important facet of their cultural identity, activities focusing more in depth on the individual role of religion in their identity development and allowing them to learn more about their own and other religions should be added to the intervention curriculum.

When trying to test the process of Muslim youth's religious identity development initiated by perceived ethnic and religious discrimination (*H2*), our results revealed non-acceptable model fit indices. Still, our study revealed interesting results in regard of Muslim youth's perceived ethnic and religious discrimination and replicated previous findings by Wenzing et al. (2023). The scales for perceived ethnic and religious discrimination correlated highly and mapped on a joint construct of *perceived ethno-religious discrimination*. Thus, it

may be hard for Muslim youth to distinguish whether others discriminate on ethnic or religious grounds. However, future studies with a bigger sample should test if Muslim ethnic minority youth who experienced high PERD at T1 would show higher religious identity resolution at T3, mediated by a growth in religious identity exploration at T2.

In addition to the small sample size that precluded some of our planned analyses, our study should be considered in the light of some limitations. Previous research (Simsek et al., 2017) found no religious changes during mid-adolescence among self-identified Muslim minority youth in four European countries but revealed a significant decline in religious identification and practices for Christian minority and majority youth. Thus, further studies, including youth from various religious backgrounds, should test if the Identity Project intervention promotes the religious identity development of youth with different religious affiliations in addition to Muslim ethnic minority youth. This is in line with the aim of the intervention to be relevant to and efficacious among youth from all cultural backgrounds. As a second limitation, we acknowledge that the present study only included two post-tests (T2 and T3). Originally, the theory of change (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017) posits that increases in exploration and resolution should confer the youth a clearer sense of inner identity (i.e., higher global identity resolution), resulting in better psychological adjustment. Given the design of the current study, we did not test global identity resolution as a mediator between religious identity development and the indices of adjustment, but it was included simultaneous to religious identity resolution and adjustment as an outcome at T3. Therefore, future studies should include at least four post-tests to be able to examine the hypothesized mediational processes in the theory of change (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017). Lastly, the current study only relied on self-reported data. Considering the risk of socially desirable answers, additional measurement assessments for our outcomes of interest should be included (e.g., video-based observational data, Umaña-Taylor et al., 2017).

5.5 Conclusion

Besides confirming the sequential process of identity development for Muslim ethnic minority youth's religious identity, our study results demonstrate the promotive role of religious identity for Muslim adolescents' adjustment. Further, by revealing that Muslim youth possess, already during adolescence, a pronounced sense of what their religion means to them and engage extensively in its development, it becomes clear that religion constitutes an important part of their identity. These findings underscore the importance to provide youth at school with tools, time and a safe space allowing them to further engage in the processes of exploring and understanding their own religious identity and to learn more about other religions and the religious identities of their classmates. When being adapted and focusing more explicitly on the role of religion – next to ethnicity – in youth's identity development, the *Identity Project* constitutes a promising opportunity for schools to support adolescents in their key developmental task of identity development while also fostering their positive adjustment. Further, the inclusion of activities and discussions focusing on the intersection of adolescents' multifaced identities, for example the intersection of their religious and ethnic identity, would provide students with a better understanding of how their different social identities are intersected and how this shapes their daily experiences, including the perception of ethno-religious discrimination.

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6 General Discussion

This dissertation aimed to investigate resources that help ethnic minority youth in Germany to foster their positive adjustment, specifically in the context of perceived discrimination at school. I pursued four major research aims: (1) to examine perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school as potential risk factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment, (2) to examine ethnic and religious identity on the personal level and parental and peer support on the social level as potential promotive and protective factors in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination, (3) to investigate how the components of religious identity development (i.e., exploration and resolution) are related to ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination and lastly, (4) to explore similarities and differences between various groups of ethnic minority youth regarding the studied relations. To reach these aims, I conducted four empirical studies based on three different data sets, including quantitative, qualitative and intervention data that were collected in four different federal states in Germany. This chapter provides an overview of my research findings related to my four research aims. Further, I discuss strengths and weaknesses and outline implications for future research. Finally, I deduce practical implications and draw a conclusion.

6.1 Research Aim 1

6.1.1 Overview of Findings

The first research aim was to examine perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school as risk factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. I addressed this research aim in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

In Chapter 2, I investigated relations between perceived ethnic discrimination and self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism, and school integration among a sample of ethnic minority

youth. Contrary to previous research (e.g., Benner et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2013), I did not find that ethnic minority youth show lower levels of (school-related) psychological adjustment when experiencing more perceived discrimination at school. However, when testing if the associations between perceived ethnic discrimination and adjustment differ between the subsamples of refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent, I found, contrary to previous research, that refugee youth who experienced more ethnic discrimination reported higher self-esteem and more self-efficacy. A possible explanation for this finding could be psychological reactance, which can be described as a motivational state caused by a perceived threat to an individual's freedom (Brehm, 1966). While previous research found discriminatory experiences to cause individuals to experience a reactive state (Wareham et al., 2011), refugee youth's higher self-esteem and self-efficacy could be effects of their psychological reactance caused by experiences of ethnic discrimination.

In Chapter 4, I expanded on the findings from Chapter 2 and previous research by focusing on experiences of religious discrimination at school, next to experiences of ethnic discrimination. While investigating the relations between ethnic and religious discrimination and self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and disruptive behavior at school among a sample of Muslim ethnic minority youth, I found that ethnic and religious discrimination mapped on a joint construct of *perceived ethno-religious discrimination*. Thus, it seems that it is hard for Muslim youth to distinguish whether teachers and/or peers discriminate on ethnic or religious grounds. More experiences of perceived ethno-religious discrimination were related to more depressive symptoms. This is in line with previous findings showing the detrimental effects of religious and ethnic discrimination on Muslim ethnic minority youth's internalizing problems (Balkaya et al., 2021).

Experiences of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination were also a common theme reported by refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in the conducted interviews (Chapter

3). However, when talking about their experiences of discrimination, the youth did not talk about how these experiences had made them feel in regard to their psychological well-being. It is, therefore, not clear if perceived ethnic and religious discrimination constitute a risk factor for their psychological adjustment.

Summarizing the results of the studies in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 regarding my first research aim, it has been shown that perceived ethno-religious discrimination constitutes a risk factor for Muslim ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment, in the form of more depressive symptoms. I did not find that experiences of ethnic and/or religious discrimination constitute a risk factor for ethnic minority youth's *school-related* psychological adjustment (i.e., in forms of less school-integration, more disruptive behavior at school). A possible explanation for this non-finding could be the support from teachers at school. Social support from teachers – especially a positive teacher-student relationship – is known to be another significant protective factor in the context of perceived discrimination (e.g., Civitillo et al., 2021; Göbel & Preusche, 2019; Juang et al., 2018), next to social support from peers and parents and ethnic minority youth's ethnic and religious identity (that I studied as potential buffers in Chapters 2 and 4). For example, Civitillo and colleagues (2021) found high teacher-student relationship quality as a buffer against the deleterious effects of ethnic discrimination on ethnic minority youth's emotional school engagement. Therefore, it may be that most of ethnic minority youth possessed (a) positive relationship(s) with teacher(s), which protected them from the negative effects of perceived ethnic and/or religious discrimination regarding their school-related adjustment.

6.1.2 Strengths and Weaknesses, Implications for Future Research

My approach to study perceived ethnic and religious discrimination as risk factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment has several strengths but also weaknesses. A strength of the present research is that it is one of the first that investigated the

role of perceived religious discrimination on ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. In addition, it focuses on the school context and includes different aspects of psychological and school-related psychological adjustment. Despite these strengths, my approach also has some weaknesses.

Firstly, the data used in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 were cross-sectional. While only providing a snapshot in time, this did not allow me to identify the directionality of the relationship between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school and (school-related) psychological adjustment. I analyzed perceived ethno-religious discrimination as a risk factor for ethnic-minority youth depressive symptoms, but there could be reciprocal influences. However, there are longitudinal studies showing discrimination to have deleterious effects on ethnic minority youth's adjustment (e.g., Brody et al., 2006; Galliher et al., 2011). Future studies should, therefore, use longitudinal designs to test for causality. Regarding the conducted interviews in Chapter 3, follow-up interviews – with more in depth-questions focusing on the youth's psychological well-being in relation to their experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school – would also allow an analysis of the longitudinal relations between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school and (school-related) psychological adjustment.

Secondly, in Chapters 2 and 4, measures for perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school only captured the occurrence (Chapters 2 and 4) and frequency (Chapter 4) of different instances of discrimination but not their intensity. For example, ethnic minority youth may have experienced similar instances of discrimination at school but in different intensities (Kaiser & Major, 2006). In addition, the two measures did not state a specific timeframe, such as in the last month or in the last year, when asking the youth about their discriminatory experiences and were just based on the youth's self-reports. While ethnic minority youth may have had different timeframes in mind when responding to the statements, self-reports for measures of discrimination could reflect a coping mechanism, for example, by

denying and under-reporting actual discrimination experiences (Lewis et al., 2017). These flaws of the two measures may have contributed to an underestimation of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school in the present research. Future studies should, therefore, use measurement instruments which enable statements about the intensity of ethnic and religious discriminatory incidents, and which state a specific time frame. In addition, self-report measures should be complemented with other methods (see Krieger et al., 2011 for an alternative method).

6.2 Research Aim 2

6.2.1 Overview of Findings

My second research aim was to investigate parental and peer support on the social level and ethnic and religious identity on the personal level as promotive and protective factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school. I addressed this research aim in all four empirical chapters.

6.2.1.1 Parental and Peer Support. In line with previous research (Shoshani et al., 2014; Stewart et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2016), in Chapter 2, both parental and peer support were revealed as promotive factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. More precisely, ethnic minority youth who received more social support from their parents were more optimistic, self-efficacious and integrated in school. In addition, ethnic minority youth with higher social support from their peers showed more self-esteem, self-efficacy, and school integration. Having a closer look at the subsamples of refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in this chapter, overall, the promotive roles of parental and peer support were confirmed. While I found parental support to constitute a promotive factor for refugee youth's self-efficacy and school integration, support from their peers was revealed as a promotive factor for their self-efficacy, self-esteem, and school integration. For youth of

immigrant descent, the results revealed parental support as a promotive factor for optimism and self-efficacy and peer support for self-esteem, self-efficacy, and school integration.

Additionally, in the conducted interviews in Chapter 3, both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent described their parents and friends as important resources in their lives. More precisely, they referred to emotional and practical support from their parents and friends. Since previous research (e.g., Silbereisen & Titzmann, 2007) showed that ethnic minority youth form friendships predominantly within their own ethnic group, we asked youth in the interviews if they are rather friends with peers from the same ethnic group or a different ethnic group. The results indicated that, especially for refugee youth, social support from same-ethnic friends constitutes an important resource. The refugee youth stated that friends from their own ethnic group would understand them better because of similar cultural norms and rules. However, in the interviews, refugee youth did not mention if and if yes, how this support promotes their psychological well-being. Thus, it is unclear if it constitutes a promotive factor for the youth regarding their (school-related) psychological adjustment.

Next to the promotive roles of parental and peer support, I looked at their protective roles in the context of perceived discrimination at school. I found various buffering effects of parental and peer support regarding ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment. Firstly, the results in Chapter 2 revealed parental support as a protective factor for youth of immigrant descent's self-esteem in the face of perceived ethnic discrimination at school. Secondly, youth of immigrant descent with more parental support even showed higher optimism when they perceived ethnic discrimination at school. Similarly, in the interviews in Chapter 3, refugee youth referred to their parents as a source of support after they have experienced ethnic discrimination at school. According to the youth, specifically, the bond of trust existing between them and their parents would allow them to share their experiences of ethnic discrimination. These findings align with the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and previous findings

(Simons et al., 2006) that highlight the importance of supportive parent-child relationships for ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination. Thirdly, I found, in Chapter 2, peer support as a protective factor for optimism in the face of ethnic discrimination for ethnic minority youth and the subsample of refugee youth.

However, I did not find parental and peer support as protective factors regarding ethnic minority youth's *school-related* psychological adjustment. As outlined before (Chapter 6.1.1), social support from teachers might have buffered the adverse effects of ethnic discrimination at school on ethnic minority youth's school-related psychological adjustment. As revealed in previous research (e.g., Civitillo et al., 2021), a positive relationship between teachers and the youth might have protected the youth from the deleterious effects of ethnic discrimination.

So far, the findings overall point to the importance of social resources as promotive factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. In addition, they revealed parental and peer support as protective factors in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination. Since ethnic minority youth might also possess personal resources that act as promotive and protective factors next to their social resources, in Chapters 4 and 5, I examined the promotive and protective roles of ethnic and religious identity.

6.2.1.2 Ethnic and Religious Identity. In line with previous research (Balkaya et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014), my empirical chapters revealed ethnic minority youth's ethnic and religious identity as promotive factors for their psychological adjustment. It is important to mention that I studied different components of ethnic and religious identity in the empirical chapters.

In Chapter 4, I found a significant positive relation between ethnic identity affirmation and self-esteem for Muslim ethnic minority youth. More precisely, Muslim ethnic minority youth who had positive feelings towards their ethnic group showed better psychological

adjustment in the form of more self-esteem. In addition, I found that positive feelings towards their religious group were associated with less depressive symptoms. Expanding on these findings, results in Chapter 5 showed higher religious identity resolution to be related to higher self-esteem and higher global identity resolution for Muslim ethnic minority youth. While overall in line with previous research findings, these results also show that associations with psychological adjustment outcomes can vary by ethnic and religious identity components.

When having a closer look at the potential protective roles of ethnic and religious identity in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination, I did not find that ethnic and religious identity protect ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. On the contrary, in Chapter 4, high ethnic and religious identifiers were found to be more vulnerable to experiences of perceived ethno-religious discrimination. While Muslim youth who identified highly with their ethnic group reported more depressive symptoms, those identifying highly with their religious group reported less self-esteem when experiencing perceived ethno-religious discrimination. It is possible that ethnic and religious identity may exacerbate the psychological burden of ethno-religious discrimination in light of the theoretical concept of identity-relevant stressors (Thoits, 1991). Thoits (1991) stated that the degree of psychological damage caused by a certain stressor is related to the salience of the corresponding role-identity. The more salient a role-identity is, the more important the identity is for an individual. In other words, stressors that threaten an individual's most valued role-identities, may be more psychologically deleterious than stressors that disrupt an individuum's less salient role-identities. Thus, ethno-religious discrimination may have functioned as an identity-relevant stressor that had posed a strong psychological burden in the form of more depressive symptoms and less self-esteem on Muslim ethnic minority youth who identified highly with their ethnic and/or religious group.

Taken together, the results of the studies in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate the promotive effects of ethnic and religious identity on ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment, However, the results did not reveal ethnic and religious identity as protective factors. Further, no promotive and protective effects were revealed regarding ethnic minority youth's school-related psychological adjustment.

Overall, both personal and social resources were identified as promotive factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. Moreover, ethnic minority youth's social resources constitute a protective factor in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination at school.

6.2.2 Strengths and Weaknesses, Implications for Future Research

A strength of my approach is that I included both personal and social resources as potential promotive and protective factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. In addition, I considered different components of youth's ethnic and religious identity when testing for their promotive and protective roles. However, my approach also has some weaknesses.

Even if I did not find ethnic and religious identity affirmation to protect ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment in the context of ethnic and religious discrimination, they may act as mediators between ethnic and religious discrimination and youth's adjustment outcomes. Referring to previous study results (e.g., Brittian et al., 2014) and Branscombe and colleagues' rejection-identification model (1999), it is possible that experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination lead, for ethnic minority youth, to increased identification with their ethnic and religious group, that, in turn, would result in better (school-related) psychological adjustment. Therefore, future research should also test ethnic and religious identity affirmation as potential mediators.

In addition, I acknowledge that in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, I did not simultaneously study the promotive and protective roles of personal and social resources; instead, I focused on parental and peer support *or* on ethnic and/or religious identity across the different samples. Considering that the samples differ based on their acculturation context or religious identification, future studies testing simultaneously the promotive and protective roles of personal and social resources in each sample are needed to reveal potential patterns across the different samples. This would also allow to investigate relations between personal and social resources (e.g., between parental support and ethnic identity).

Lastly, I acknowledge that the data used in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 were cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand to what extent family, peer and identity processes promote ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and offer protection against ethnic and religious discrimination over time. Previous research showed that during adolescence, youth restructure their network of significant others. While at the beginning of adolescence, parents still occupy the central position in youth's network, gradually, peers become increasingly important and take the place of the parents as the most important reference persons. Peer attachment grows significantly between the beginning of adolescence and early adulthood (Delgado et al., 2011; Meeus & Dekovic, 1995; Zeifman & Hazan, 2008). In addition, research showed that the processes of ethnic identity exploration and resolution follow a developmental pattern during adolescence, mainly reasoned by the social and cognitive changes occurring during this time, which facilitate the exploration and resolution of one's ethnicity. More precisely, longitudinal growth from middle to late adolescence was found for ethnic identity exploration and resolution (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Considering these findings, future research should examine if patterns regarding the promotive and protective roles of parental and peer support and ethnic and religious identity change over the developmental period of adolescence in the different samples.

6.3 Research Aim 3

6.3.1 Overview of Findings

The third research aim was to investigate how the components of religious identity development (i.e., religious identity exploration and resolution) are related to ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school. I addressed this research aim in Chapters 3 and 5.

In Chapter 5, I found higher religious identity resolution to be related to higher self-esteem and higher global identity resolution for Muslim ethnic minority youth. Further, I investigated how experiences of perceived ethno-religious discrimination at school are related to Muslim ethnic minority youth's religious identity development, i.e., if they would initiate the process of religious identity development. I used longitudinal data from the Identity Project intervention and tested if Muslim ethnic minority youth who perceive more ethno-religious discrimination (at T1) will shower higher religious identity resolution (at T3), which would be mediated by increases in religious identity exploration (at T2). Unfortunately, the model revealed a non-acceptable model fit, so that the study did not reveal results regarding the associations between discrimination at school and the components of religious identity development.

In the conducted interviews in Chapter 3, ethnic minority youth reported about experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination, while they also referred to their identity development. While some ethnic minority youth mentioned to face difficulties during the process of identity formation, others expressed to have a clear sense of their religious identity. However, the youth did not mention if and if yes how their clear sense of religious identity is related to their psychological adjustment and to experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination.

Summing up, the results revealed a positive association between religious identity resolution and ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment but did not reveal how religious identity exploration and resolution are related to experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school.

6.3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses, Implications for Future Research

A strength of my approach to study how components of religious identity development are related to ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination at school is that it considered different components of youth's identity development, namely religious identity exploration and resolution.

However, it also has some weaknesses. The combination of high model complexity and a rather small sample size in Chapter 5 did not allow me to test if experiences of perceived ethno-religious discrimination would initiate the process of religious identity development. Therefore, future studies with a larger sample of ethnic minority youth are needed, also allowing for more reliable results. In addition, follow-up questions in interviews with ethnic minority youth would give me the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how religious identity development and discriminatory experiences are intertwined.

6.4 Research Aim 4

6.4.1 Overview of Findings

The fourth research aim was to explore similarities and differences in the relations between perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school, personal and social resources and (school-related) psychological adjustment between different groups of ethnic minority youth, i.e., refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent and Muslim youth. While I explored

similarities and differences between refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent in Chapters 2 and 3, in Chapters 4 and 5, I focused on Muslim ethnic minority youth.

In Chapter 2, I found for both refugee youth and youth of immigrant descent positive associations between parental and peer support and their (school-related) psychological adjustment. However, the results revealed differential relations regarding the protective roles of parental and peer support. While for refugee youth, high peer support protected their psychological adjustment, for youth of immigrant descent, high parental support took a protective role in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination at school. Interestingly, in the interviews in Chapter 3, refugee youth specifically referred to their parents and their emotional and practical support when talking about how they cope with experiences of ethnic discrimination. Thus, it seems that for refugee youth, both peer and parental support are important resources protecting their psychological adjustment, while for youth of immigrant descent, parental support constitutes a protective factor. Considering that parents of refugee youth, like their children, are going through the process of acculturation and must cope with salient stressors arising from the acculturation process, refugee youth may seek additional support from their peers to not put too much additional burden on their parents.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I focused on Muslim ethnic minority youth and the promotive and protective roles of ethnic and religious identity in the face of perceived ethno-religious discrimination at school. As I did not examine the roles of parental and peer support for Muslim ethnic minority youth's adjustment in these chapters and did not include ethnic and religious identity as potential promotive and protective factors in Chapter 2, it is challenging to discover patterns within the different groups regarding promotive and protective factors, allowing to examine similarities and differences between the three groups. Still, I found that for all groups (i.e., refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent, and Muslim youth), experiences of discrimination were differently related to their psychological adjustment. While in Chapter 2,

refugee youth even showed better psychological adjustment, and for youth of immigrant descent, no significant relation was found, in Chapter 4, Muslim ethnic minority youth showed less psychological adjustment when experiencing discrimination at school. This shows that experiences of discrimination at school can affect refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent and Muslim ethnic minority youth in different ways, thus highlighting the importance of distinguishing between different groups of ethnic minority youth.

6.4.2 Strengths and Weaknesses, Implications for Future Research

A strength of my approach is that I included different groups of ethnic minority youth in my analyses, allowing to identify similarities and differences between the groups and to develop targeted intervention strategies that address specific needs or challenges faced by refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent and Muslim ethnic minority youth. However, my approach has also some weaknesses.

As already shortly mentioned in the overview of findings (6.4.1), I acknowledge that in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, I did not simultaneously study the promotive and protective roles of personal and social resources. Instead, I focused on parental and peer support *or* on ethnic and/or religious identity across the different samples. Consequently, I could not identify patterns within the groups regarding promotive and protective factors, allowing me to examine similarities and differences between the three groups. Therefore, future studies that simultaneously test the promotive and protective roles of personal and social resources among all groups are crucial. In addition, future studies should consider the *intersectionality* of multiple social identities to better understand how this shapes experiences and consequences of discrimination and the roles of personal and social resources. This is of particular relevance because being a member of multiple minoritized groups (e.g., Muslim, refugee youth, male) can make youth particularly vulnerable to experiences of discrimination (Moffitt et al., 2018).

While the small sample size in Chapter 4 did not allow for splitting the group of Muslim ethnic minority youth into smaller subgroups, studies using larger samples would allow the use of more differentiated categorizations.

However, it is important to mention that categorizing ethnic minority youth (and any classification of people) into groups bears the risk of oversimplifying and disregarding their complex identities and diverse experiences. This can result in neglecting or disregarding individual differences within the groups (Gillespie et al., 2012; Jacobs, 2018). Further, it bears the risk of reinforcing negative stereotypes and prejudices, perpetuating discrimination, and marginalization of ethnic minority youth. Therefore, it is important that future research approaches the categorization process with caution and sensitivity while also using research practices that center ethnic minority youth's voices and individual experiences and needs. In this regard, the use of qualitative research methods (e.g., interviews and focus groups), in addition to quantitative methods, constitutes a promising opportunity to gain insights into ethnic minority youth's lived experiences.

6.5 Overarching Aim

6.5.1 Overview of Findings

The overarching aim of this dissertation was to investigate resources helping ethnic minority youth in Germany to foster their positive adjustment, specifically in the context of perceived discrimination at school. My results show that both personal (i.e., ethnic and religious identity) and social resources (i.e., parental and peer support) constitute crucial factors for promoting ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. In addition, my results revealed ethnic minority youth's social resources as important protective factors in the face of discriminatory experiences at school.

6.5.2 Strengths and Weaknesses, Implications for Future Research

One of the key strengths of this dissertation is that it considered risks and resources from different contextual levels influencing ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. Focusing on experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination in the specific context of school, my research considered and identified individual-level resources (i.e., personal resources; ethnic and religious identity) and resources that are situated within youth's microsystems (i.e., social resources; parental and peer support). However, future research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying these resources. For example, future qualitative studies should examine more in detail what practices ethnic minority youth associate with social support from their parents and peers and how these practices support them.

Another important strength of my research is that it addresses the call for greater specificity in acculturation research (Bornstein, 2017) by not only focusing on ethnic minority youth in general but also on different groups of ethnic minority youth. This allowed me to investigate resources that are universally beneficial for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment and to analyze the promotive and protective roles of resources for different groups of ethnic minority youth, thus facilitating the development of tailored intervention strategies. As already mentioned in Chapter 6.4.2, categorizing ethnic minority youth into groups bears the risk of oversimplifying and disregarding their complex identities and diverse experiences. Next to categories related to immigrant descent (and not "migration background") and religious self-identification, I also use the term *ethnic minority youth* throughout this thesis. While referring to youth who are minoritized due to their ethnicity (meaning that they generally experience a low status in society), with this term, I aimed to reference the lived experiences of youth in our hierarchically structured societies. Still, it is important to consider that youth who are minoritized may not identify as members of an ethnic

minority (anymore). Therefore, it is all the more important for future research to listen to the youth and to center their voices.

6.6 Practical Implications

Additional research employing longitudinal studies is necessary to confirm the directionality of the relationships proposed in my research. Assumed that these studies will obtain similar results, my research offers several practical implications for schools in Germany, addressing the interpersonal and institutional levels. Besides confirming the harmful effects of perceived ethno-religious discrimination on ethnic minority youth's psychological adjustment, the results revealed both personal (i.e., ethnic and religious identity) and social resources (i.e., parental and peer support) as significant promotive and protective factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment. Therefore, schools need to simultaneously promote their student's ethnic and religious identity development and foster support from peers and parents while also preventing and tackling discrimination.

Considering that positive intergroup contact has been found to reduce prejudices against outgroup members (Christ et al., 2014; Pettrigrew & Tropp, 2006) and taking the positive effect of cross-ethnic friendships for ethnic minority youth's adjustment (e.g., Schachner et al., 2015) into account, fostering contact and cooperation between peers with diverse ethnic backgrounds constitutes a favorable recommendation for schools. For example, cooperative learning methods or joint sports activities where ethnic minority youth and youth from the majority group form a tandem to solve a task or to perform an activity can help to break down prejudices while promoting the development of peer networks and fostering ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment (Alhaddad et al., 2021; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Since peer support specifically emerged as a significant protective factor for refugee youth in my results, establishing such tandems holds paramount importance for them.

Additionally, my results revealed ethnic minority youth's ethnic and religious identity as promotive factors for their (school-related) psychological adjustment. Therefore, schools would do well to help youth develop a clearer understanding of their identities. This may be achieved by implementing identity-value approaches, in which the students learn more about their own and their classmates' backgrounds and identities. In this regard, also difficult topics such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination should be addressed while raising youth's critical consciousness. In addition, collective discussions and cooperative tasks carried out by students with different ethnic and/or religious backgrounds could foster peer support while also reducing prejudices. Focusing on youth's ethnic identity development, the Identity Project intervention constitutes an example of such an identity-value approach, fostering youth's positive adjustment (Umaña-Taylor & Douglass, 2017). When being adapted and focusing more explicitly on the role of religion – next to ethnicity – in youth's identity development, the Identity Project provides a promising avenue for schools to support youth in the development of their ethnic and religious identity while fostering their (school-related) psychological adjustment. Considering that my research specifically focused on Muslim ethnic minority youth when examining the promotive and protective roles of ethnic and religious identity, such an identity-value approach is of significant importance for them.

Fostering positive intergroup contact and youth's (ethnic and religious) identity development entails substantial teacher engagement. However, many teachers are not trained and prepared to deal with culturally and ethnically diverse classrooms. While in the last decades various pedagogical approaches (e.g., culturally responsive teaching, Gay, 2000) offered foundations for encouraging teachers to gain knowledge about how to connect learning to the knowledge and experience of all students, become aware of own preconceptions and how they relate to structural inequity and how to engage in discussions about everyday racism, discrimination, and prejudice, they are still under-utilized in the German school context (Moffitt

et al., 2018). Therefore, future teachers must be already taught in the early stages of their professional development how to teach about cultural diversity and avoid acting in discriminatory ways towards their students (Civitillo et al., 2023). To combat not just interpersonal but institutional discrimination, culturally relevant pedagogy should be incorporated into all teacher training programs, not as an add-on but as an integral component across all subjects (Milner, 2011).

Next to the beneficial roles of peer support and ethnic and religious identity for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment, parental support was revealed as a promotive and protective factor in the context of perceived ethnic discrimination. Since for many parents of ethnic minority youth, insufficient language skills constitute a major barrier to taking part in consultations with their children's teachers, schools would do well in providing interpreters and cultural brokers. This would allow a good collaboration between teachers and parents regarding the identification of the support needs of the youth, in turn fostering youth's school-related psychological adjustment (Garcia-Reid et al., 2015). In addition, family-centered interventions teaching parents tools for supporting their children in dealing with discriminatory experiences should be implemented. Considering that parental ethnic-racial socialization has been revealed as a significant protective factor in the context of ethnic discrimination for ethnic minority youth (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett Jr., 2008), teaching parents how they can best educate their children about race and ethnicity, and how to support their children's development of a strong ethnic identity is crucial. Such family-centered interventions could, for example, be conducted in cooperation with family counselling centers.

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the present research shines a spotlight on personal and social resources helping ethnic minority youth in Germany to foster their positive adjustment, specifically in the context of perceived ethnic and religious discrimination at school. By applying a resource-

oriented perspective and considering risks and resources from different contextual levels, promotive and protective factors for ethnic minority youth's (school-related) psychological adjustment were identified in four empirical studies that were based on three datasets of ethnic minority youth in Germany. While the studies revealed social support from peers and parents and youth's ethnic and religious identity as significant resources promoting their (school-related) psychological adjustment, the results show that experiences of discrimination may hurt less for ethnic minority youth who receive high levels of social support from their peers and parents. In addition, the present research provides valuable insights into the differences between various groups of ethnic minority youth (i.e., refugee youth, youth of immigrant descent and Muslim ethnic minority youth) regarding their experiences of ethnic and religious discrimination and needs for support in the German school context. The findings offer several starting points for future research, such as further studying the mechanisms that underlie and can explain the results found. Moreover, they underline the significance of tailored approaches for schools and teachers that foster ethnic minority youth's personal and social resources (e.g., via promoting positive intergroup contact and youth's identity development) while simultaneously preventing and tackling ethnic and religious discrimination.

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Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich *Julia Marie Christina Wenzing*, an Eides Statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation mit dem Titel „Promoting and Protecting Positive Adjustment of Ethnic Minority Youth in Germany: Personal and Social Resources in the Context of Perceived Discrimination" eigenständig verfasst habe. Ich versichere, dass ich keine anderen als die von mir angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel verwendet habe und dass ich alle Stellen, die direkt aus anderen Werken übernommen oder inhaltlich angelehnt sind, deutlich als solche gekennzeichnet habe.

Weiterhin erkläre ich, dass ich bisher keine Promotionsversuche unternommen habe, die ohne Abschluss beendet wurden und dass diese Dissertation in der gegenwärtigen oder in irgendeiner anderen Form noch keiner anderen Fakultät oder wissenschaftlichen Einrichtung zum Zweck der Erlangung eines akademischen Grades vorgelegt wurde. Mir ist bewusst, dass eine falsche eidesstattliche Erklärung strafrechtliche Folgen nach sich ziehen und zur Aberkennung meines akademischen Grades führen kann.

Leipzig, 04.03.2024