

## **Abstract**

Adolescents have the normative developmental task to develop an ethical belief system of knowing what is right and wrong that guides their behaviour in agreement with societal expectations. Failure in developing such a belief system can lead to a number of negative outcomes, such as delinquency and antisocial behaviour. Immigrant adolescents are also confronted with this developmental task, but its resolution may be hindered by additional challenges related to their immigrant status. Based on general and acculturation-specific theories, this comparative study investigated differences in native and immigrant adolescents' delinquent beliefs, which can be seen as an indicator of an unsuccessful or suboptimal development of an ethical belief system.

The sample comprised Turkish mother-adolescent immigrant dyads, ethnic German mother-adolescent diaspora dyads and native German mother-adolescent dyads. The immigrant groups were chosen based on their distinctive cultural distance to German mainstream culture. The immigrant adolescents reported higher mean levels of delinquent beliefs than the German natives, and differed in the explanation of interindividual differences. The acculturation-specific predictors (discrimination and cultural orientation) predicted delinquent beliefs for the Turks, whereas the general predictors (child disclosure and being in a romantic relationship) predicted delinquent beliefs for the ethnic Germans. For the native Germans, only gender was a significant predictor. These results imply that further comparative research is required to detect universal and group-specific mechanisms in the adaptation of immigrant and native adolescents.