

Thomann, Eva; Hjort Rapp, Carolin; Ziegler, Katharina; Gómez Díaz, Jana

**Working Paper**

## Modelling the effect of passive representation and intersectionality on perceived bureaucratic discrimination

Working Paper Series, No. 36

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

University of Konstanz, Cluster of Excellence "The Politics of Inequality. Perceptions, Participation and Policies"

*Suggested Citation:* Thomann, Eva; Hjort Rapp, Carolin; Ziegler, Katharina; Gómez Díaz, Jana (2024) : Modelling the effect of passive representation and intersectionality on perceived bureaucratic discrimination, Working Paper Series, No. 36, University of Konstanz, Cluster of Excellence "The Politics of Inequality", Konstanz, <https://doi.org/10.48787/kops/352-2-1mfavmn3sue2>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/300842>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

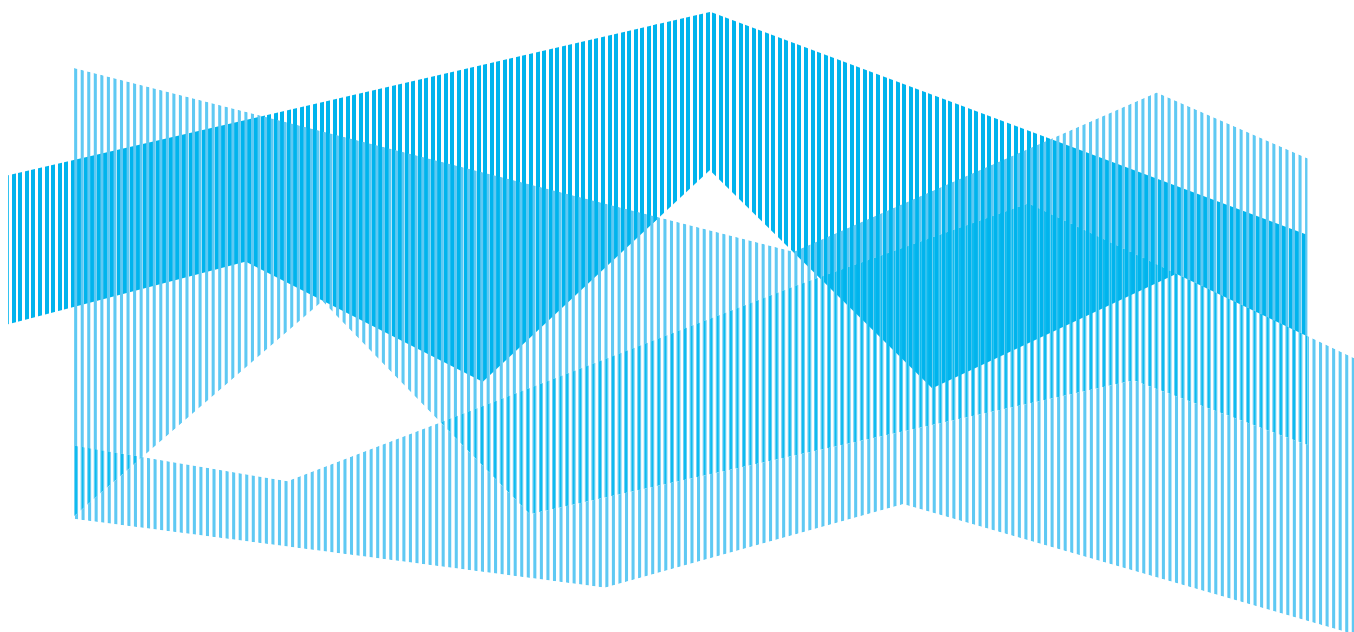
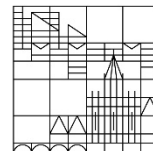
Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



# Modelling the Effect of Passive Representation and Intersectionality on Perceived Bureaucratic Discrimination

Eva Thomann, University of Konstanz, [eva.thomann@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:eva.thomann@uni-konstanz.de)

Carolin Hjort Rapp, University of Copenhagen, [cara@ifs.ku.dk](mailto:cara@ifs.ku.dk)

Katharina Ziegler, University of Konstanz, [katharina.3.ziegler@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:katharina.3.ziegler@uni-konstanz.de)

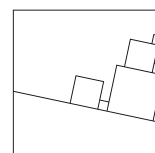
Jana Gómez Díaz, University of Konstanz, [jana.gomez-diaz@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:jana.gomez-diaz@uni-konstanz.de)

**Working Paper Series of the Cluster “The Politics of Inequality”:**

→ <http://inequality.uni.kn/working-papers>

Working papers of the Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality” serve to disseminate the research results of work in progress prior to publication. Inclusion of a paper in the working paper series does not constitute publication and should not limit publication in any other outlet. The working papers published by the Cluster represent the views of the respective author(s) and not of the Cluster as a whole.

Cluster of Excellence  
The Politics of Inequality



## About the authors

Eva Thomann is a full professor of Public Administration at the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Konstanz. Her research interest revolves around policy implementation, Europeanization and European integration, street-level bureaucracy, multilevel governance, hybrid governance, public accountability, behavioral public administration, and case-oriented and set-theoretic research methods.

Carolin Hjort Rapp is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Copenhagen. Her research interest lies at the intersection between Political Sociology, Political Psychology, and Social Policy Research with a strong focus on the comparative perspective.

Katharina Ziegler holds a Bachelor's degree in Politics and Public Administration from the University of Konstanz.

Jana Gómez Díaz is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Konstanz. Her research revolves around themes associated with the regulatory regime. In a broad sense, she explores the dynamics of interactions among various actors within the regulatory regime and investigates their repercussions.

# **Modelling the effect of passive representation and intersectionality on perceived bureaucratic discrimination**

## **Authors:**

**Eva Thomann**, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, [eva.thomann@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:eva.thomann@uni-konstanz.de). ORCID: 0000-0001-6837-4787

**Carolín Hjort Rapp**, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, [cara@ifs.ku.dk](mailto:cara@ifs.ku.dk). ORCID: 0000-0001-5152-6799

**Katharina Ziegler**, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, [katharina.3.ziegler@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:katharina.3.ziegler@uni-konstanz.de)

**Jana Gómez Díaz\***, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, [jana.gomez-diaz@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:jana.gomez-diaz@uni-konstanz.de). ORCID: 0000-0003-1539-8114

\*Corresponding author

## **Abstract**

This research note sets out to draw up a research agenda on the role of passive representation and intersectionality for perceived bureaucratic discrimination, emphasizing the need to open the discussion on how to model intersectionality and improve the measurement of subjective discrimination. The research note draws on the illustrative example of education, which is one of the earliest and most prominent places where individuals experience discrimination. Street-level bureaucrats, such as teachers, play a pivotal role in delivering public services and ensuring equal rights, yet biased behaviors based on characteristics like ethnicity and gender persist. This research builds on representative bureaucracy theory, which posits that a diverse staff reflective of the population can mitigate discrimination, but introduces the complexity of intersectionality—the idea that individuals belong to multiple social groups, impacting their experiences of discrimination uniquely.

Through an exploratory online survey conducted among social science students at the University of Konstanz, the study investigates the combined effects of multiple overlapping identities of students and teachers on experiences of discrimination in schools. The survey captures various dimensions of perceived unfair treatment, including assessment, punishment, and support. Findings indicate that students with a migration background, particularly males, experience higher levels of discrimination. While gender-based discrimination is less evident, female representation among teachers appears to reduce discrimination for female students. However, overall teacher diversity does not significantly impact perceived discrimination.

The research note underscores the importance of considering intersectionality in understanding bureaucratic discrimination in future research and suggests that merely increasing diversity among teachers is insufficient. Effective representation and attention to student intersectionality are crucial for addressing discrimination, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to support vulnerable groups. Future research should include more diverse samples and contexts to further explore these complex patterns.

**Keywords:** Bureaucratic discrimination, intersectionality, passive representation, representative bureaucracy

## **Introduction**

Most individuals' primary interaction with state representatives comes through everyday encounters with street-level bureaucrats, such as teachers and police officers, who are instrumental in delivering public services. These bureaucrats have significant discretion but are expected to ensure equal rights protection for all citizens (Frederickson 2015; Jensen and van Kersbergen 2016; Lipsky 1980). However, bureaucratic discrimination, which is the biased

behaviour of these bureaucrats based on citizens' characteristics like ethnicity or gender, is a prevalent issue that undermines this principle of equality (Dovidio et al. 2010: 9; Pager and Shepherd 2008). Such discrimination perpetuates social inequalities, as evidenced by empirical research, making it challenging for discriminated groups to access public services and assert their rights. Discrimination theories suggest that social identity plays a critical role, where biases lead to preferential treatment of similar individuals while disadvantaging minorities in their interactions with bureaucrats (Adam et al. 2021; Dovidio et al. 2010; Moseley and Thomann 2021). One solution suggested by representative bureaucracy theory proposes diversifying staff to reflect the diversity within populations can reduce such discrimination (Bradbury and Kellough 2011; Kennedy 2014; Riccucci and van Ryzin 2017). However, evidence of the effectiveness of this passive representation in reducing discrimination is mixed (Fernandez et al. 2018; Headley and Wright 2020; Hong 2017; Kennedy 2014; Meier et al. 1999; Nicholson-Crotty et al. 2017; Pedersen et al. 2018; Riccucci and van Ryzin 2017; Schram et al. 2009; Xu and Meier 2021).

This research note introduces another layer of complexity: intersectionality, the concept that individuals simultaneously belong to multiple social groups, influencing their experiences of social injustice, discrimination, and oppression (Crenshaw 1989). Intersectionality complicates the dynamics of bureaucratic discrimination and representative bureaucracy, as different identities might interact in various ways, enhancing or mitigating discrimination (Crenshaw 1989; Dahl and Krog 2018). Despite its importance, intersectionality remains underexplored in empirical research and representative bureaucracy scholarship.

Our study investigates how intersectionality and passive representation influence perceived bureaucratic discrimination by asking: How can intersectionality and passive representation be accounted for and how do they jointly affect perceived bureaucratic discrimination? We utilize theories of intersectionality, representative bureaucracy, and diversity to explore the combined

effects of multiple overlapping identities of students and teachers. In educational settings, experienced discrimination is particularly impactful and formative (Meier 1984; Olsen et al. 2021; Xu and Meier 2021). An exploratory online survey conducted among social science students at the University of Konstanz examines these dynamics, focusing on various experiences of discrimination at schools, including unfair treatment, punishment, and support. This approach enables an empirical analysis of complex intersectional patterns of discrimination and the diversity of teacher identities.

## **Theory and expectations**

Observational and experimental evidence indicates that women and minority groups are more likely to face bureaucratic discrimination in various sectors, including welfare, policing, and education. This discrimination stems from three cognitive processes: statistical discrimination based on stereotypes, taste-based discrimination driven by biases, and stereotyping from socialization. Since bureaucrats' discrimination mirrors that of the general population, more diverse student populations in schools are expected to encounter increased discrimination.

However, intersectionality theory, originating from feminist theory, suggests that discrimination is not solely based on a single characteristic (Bearfield 2009; Cole 2009; Crenshaw 1989; Hancock 2007; McCall 2005). It emphasizes how different attributes, like gender and ethnicity, interact and amplify discrimination. This theory challenges the traditional research approach that often treats characteristics as homogenous. Intersectionality posits that multiple identities intersect in complex ways, producing distinct disadvantages or advantages. The debate within this literature revolves around whether intersectional identities create additive ("double jeopardy") or multiplicative effects, with the latter suggesting that combined identities form unique, compounded experiences beyond the sum of their parts. Therefore, when considering the impact of student identity on bureaucratic discrimination, we should consider

both the direct effects of single or combined characteristics and the multiplicative nature of intersectionality. An additive approach would predict more significant discrimination with each additional minority characteristic a student possesses, while a multiplicative approach suggests a more complex interaction of these characteristics.

***H1a: Direct effects of student identity.*** *Female and/or non-binary students and/or students with a migration background are more likely to have experienced discriminatory treatment at school.*

Conversely, we expect interaction effects of student identity from a multiplicative understanding.

***H1b: Interaction effects of student identity.*** *The effect of a student's migration background on their likelihood to experience discriminatory treatment at school is contingent on the student's gender and vice versa.*

Representative bureaucracy theory suggests that enhancing minority representation in public employment can improve diversity and equity in organizational performance (Krislov 1974; Mosher 1968). This theory posits that a diverse bureaucracy better reflects the views of its diverse clientele (Bradbury and Kellough 2008; Dolan and Rosenbloom 2003; Meier and Nigro 1976). Passive representation, where the bureaucracy's demographics mirror the general population, is believed to influence client attitudes and behaviours positively. Active representation occurs when bureaucrats advocate for clients with similar identities, often treating them more favourably (Kennedy 2014; Mosher 1968; Webeck and Lee 2022).

Research primarily focusing on race and gender representation indicates that passive representation can reduce bureaucratic discrimination and bias, although its effectiveness varies. According to this theory, students should experience less discrimination when their identities are reflected among their teachers, implying a direct relationship between representation and perceived discrimination.



***H2a: Direct effect of representation.*** *Students who report having had similar teachers are less likely to have experienced discriminatory treatment at school.*

However, we could also conceive of this relationship as an interaction effect, meaning that a particular student's identity may or may not matter for experiences of discrimination, depending on the extent to which the student is represented by their teachers.<sup>1</sup>

***H2b: Interaction effect of representation.*** *The effect of students' migration background on their likelihood to experience discriminatory treatment at school is contingent on their teachers' migration background, and vice versa.*

*Similarly, the effect of students' gender on their likelihood to experience discriminatory treatment at school is contingent on their teachers' gender, and vice versa.*

While representative bureaucracy is thought to mitigate bureaucratic discrimination, the specific mechanisms at play are not fully understood. Active representation, where bureaucrats advocate for clients with similar identities, doesn't always lead to less discrimination, as it depends on the treatment of other client groups. Empirical studies show that the effects of active representation are complex and not always straightforward (Fernandez et al. 2018; Hong 2017; Kennedy 2014; Meier et al. 1999; Nicholson-Crotty et al. 2017; Pedersen et al. 2018; Raaphorst et al. 2024; Riccucci and van Ryzin 2017; Schram et al. 2009; Thomann et al. 2024).

An alternative mechanism is symbolic representation, where clients respond positively to bureaucrats who share their identities, fostering trust and willingness to cooperate. This form of representation is thought to reduce discrimination, not through active advocacy but by symbolic presence. However, the same outcome is expected: greater similarity between service

---

<sup>1</sup> In the literature on bureaucratic discrimination, this mechanism is usually tested by focusing on single characteristics separately—research on intersectional bureaucratic representation is in its infancy (Meier 2019; but see Faye et al. 2021). We cannot assess representation based on more than one characteristic here due to a lack of diversity in our sample. Instead, we account for the effects of intersectional teacher diversity.

providers and clients correlates with less discrimination.

Beyond representation, this paper suggests that the (perceived) diversity of the organizational context independently affects discrimination. Ethnographic and experimental research indicates that the meso-context of organizations plays a crucial role. Organizational diversity, defined as differences between individuals, can lead to more equitable outcomes but also has the potential for negative effects, including exclusion through intergroup biases.

Bernstein et al. (2020) argue that discrimination can decrease in diverse settings through "generative interactions," which require overcoming exclusionary dynamics and engaging in positive interactions sustained by relevant organizational practices. Repeated contact within a diverse teacher body, regardless of student identity, may help reduce discriminatory behaviours among all teachers if such generative interactions occur.

***H3a: Direct effect of perceived diversity.*** *In schools where students perceive a higher share of female teachers and teachers with a migration background, they are less likely to report experiencing discriminatory treatment.*

For this diversity mechanism, intersectionality in teachers' diversity may also play a role in its effects on discrimination (Breslin et al. 2017). Adopting the multiplicative intersectional approach mentioned above, we theorize the effect of multiple dimensions of diversity as an open empirical question, where teachers' gender diversity may work out differently at different levels of diversity in migration backgrounds, for instance.

***H3b: Interaction effect of diversity.*** *The effect of teachers' migration background on students' likelihood to experience discriminatory treatment at school is contingent on the teachers' gender and vice versa.*

## Data and methods

To answer our research hypotheses, we rely on original survey data. We asked social science students from the University of Konstanz to answer a short online survey about their experiences at school.<sup>2</sup> This retrospective survey included questions about perceived discrimination, the gender and migration background of the respondents, and the perceived composition of the teachers in terms of their gender, migration background, and sexual orientation.<sup>3</sup> A total of 252 students answered the survey. To capture experiences of discrimination, we ask respondents about their experiences with different types of unfair treatment during their time at school. The questionnaire included six questions about the relationship and experiences of unfair treatment by teachers, see Table 1. In schools, bureaucratic discrimination manifests in various ways, influencing the formative experiences of students. We examine teachers' biased or unfair treatment, considering three main areas: assessment, punishment, and support. Assessment discrimination involves biased grading based on stereotypes. Punishment discrimination is seen in the application of disciplinary actions, often influenced by racial biases. The area of student support, an underexplored aspect, involves differential treatment based on perceived deservingness. Additionally, the overall nature of student-teacher relationships and trust levels are crucial in understanding education discrimination. This comprehensive approach acknowledges the multiple forms bureaucratic discrimination can take in schools.

---

<sup>2</sup> Our sample is a typical convenience sample that is not representative of our population, i.e. all high school (*Gymnasium*) students in Germany. Our sample includes more female students and is limited to individuals that proceeded to University after school. Moreover, they were admitted to a rather competitive field of study. Our sample, thus, includes individuals that are very similar in their educational level and socioeconomic background. However, this also means that we have fewer individuals with a migration background in our sample. Overall, the sample limitation may have the consequence that we underestimate the effects between representation and perceived discrimination.

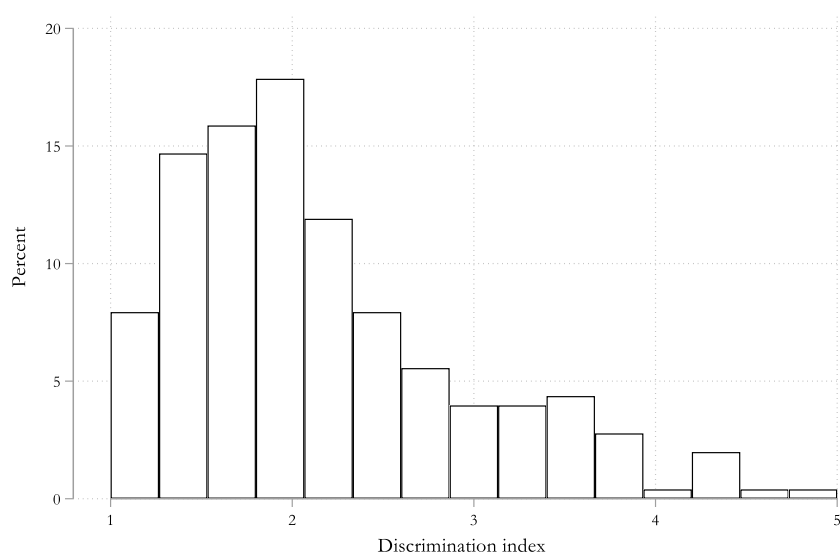
<sup>3</sup> While the survey asked about the teachers' presumed sexual orientation, the data only shows two cases where respondents suspected that their teacher was non-heterosexual. Based on this low number, we refrain from adding this variable to the data analysis.

Table 1: Questions capturing discrimination

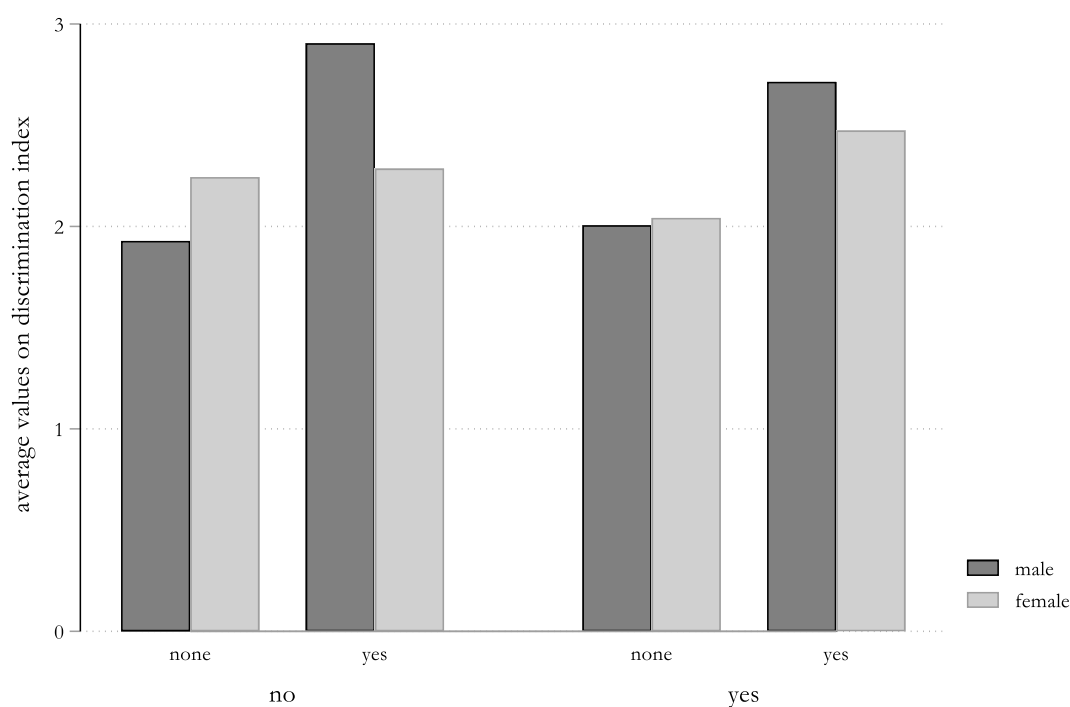
Variable	Survey question	Answer categories
<b>Dependent variables: bureaucratic discrimination</b>		
On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to what extent are you agreeing with the following statements?		
<b>General unfair treatment</b>	There have been incidents where one or several of my teachers treated me unfairly, compared to other students who were not like me.	1= Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree No answer
<b>Assessment</b>	There have been incidents where one or several of my teachers underestimated my capabilities, compared to other students who were not like me	
<b>Punishment</b>	There have been incidents where one or several of my teachers punished me without apparent reason, compared to other students who were not like me	
<b>Support</b>	There have been incidents where one or several of my teachers did not provide me with the support I needed, compared to other students who were not like me	
<b>Relationship</b>	In general, the relationship I had with my teachers was good. (reverse-coded)	
<b>Trust</b>	In general, I had a relationship of trust with my teachers and could confide in them (reverse-coded)	

Following a maximum likelihood factor analysis, all six items load on one factor (see Table A1 in the supplementary material). Hence, we construct a discrimination index combining these six items ( $\alpha=0.82$ ). The additive index ranges from 1 to 5, with higher values indicating more experienced discrimination. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the index.

*Figure 1: Distribution of discrimination index*



*Figure 2: Distribution of discrimination index by gender (male/female), migration background (none/yes), and sexual orientation (heterosexual no/yes)*



Our main independent variables of interest are the respondent's gender (male=0, female=1), migration background (no=0, yes=1), and sexual orientation (0=homosexual, 1=heterosexual). Figure 2 shows the distribution of our discrimination index by respondents' gender, migration background and whether they identify as heterosexual. We see that those identifying as non-

heterosexual have higher values on the discrimination index, in particular, if they are male and have an immigration background. Yet, case numbers in these categories are low and must be treated cautiously.<sup>4</sup>

Bureaucratic representation is captured by asking respondents about their teachers' gender and migration background. The respondents were asked to roughly estimate how many of their teachers were female, heterosexual, not cisgender, or had a visible migration background, respectively.<sup>5</sup> While this retrospective may include some false memories, it is the perceived composition of teachers we aim at with this measure. Following this information, we generated a variable that indicates whether respondents were represented by their teachers in terms of gender and/or migration background. The variable equals 1 if, for example, male students were in a surrounding with fewer than 50% of female teachers or female students were in a mainly female surrounding. The same applies to migration background, i.e. individuals with a migration background at a school with more than 10% of teachers with a migration background receive a 1 on this variable.

On the other hand, the representation variable equals 0 if there is no representative match between students' and teachers' characteristics. Thus, this variable equals 1 if one was represented based on gender or migration background. Overall, roughly 50% of our sample were represented by their teachers, while the other 50% were not. We further include a measure for the overall diversity of the context, adding the variables for the gender and migration composition of teachers together (additive index).

---

<sup>4</sup> We have additional graphs in the appendix (Figures A1-A6) showing the levels of perceived discrimination for each item of the discrimination index by gender and migration background. They mainly reveal that male students with a migration background report more discrimination on average.

<sup>5</sup> Answer categories 1= None, 2 = <5%, 3= 5-9%, 4 = 10-25%, 5 = 26-50%, 6 = 51-75% 7 = >75%, NA= No Answer

The empirical analysis is based on simple multiple regression with and without interaction effects. The models include age as a control variable. Beyond that, the models are kept simple because our sample is cohesive regarding educational and social background. Table 2 provides a descriptive overview of our sample. We can see that most of our sample is female (62.9 per cent) and overwhelmingly heterosexual (78.7 per cent). In comparison, a minority of 16.47 per cent of the students report having a migration background.

*Table 2: Description of sample*

	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>NA's</i>
<b>Student age</b>	18	36	22	22.74	0
<b>Student gender</b>	0	1	1	0.629	4
<b>Student migration</b>	0	1	0	0.1647	3
<b>Student hetero</b>	0	1	1	0.7871	3

N = 248.

Regarding teacher diversity (see Table 3), none of the students report having more than 25 per cent of teachers with migration backgrounds. The teacher body appears to have a relatively good gender balance, but homosexual teachers and those with migration backgrounds were rare among the respondents. Overall, apart from gender, our sample displays low levels of diversity.

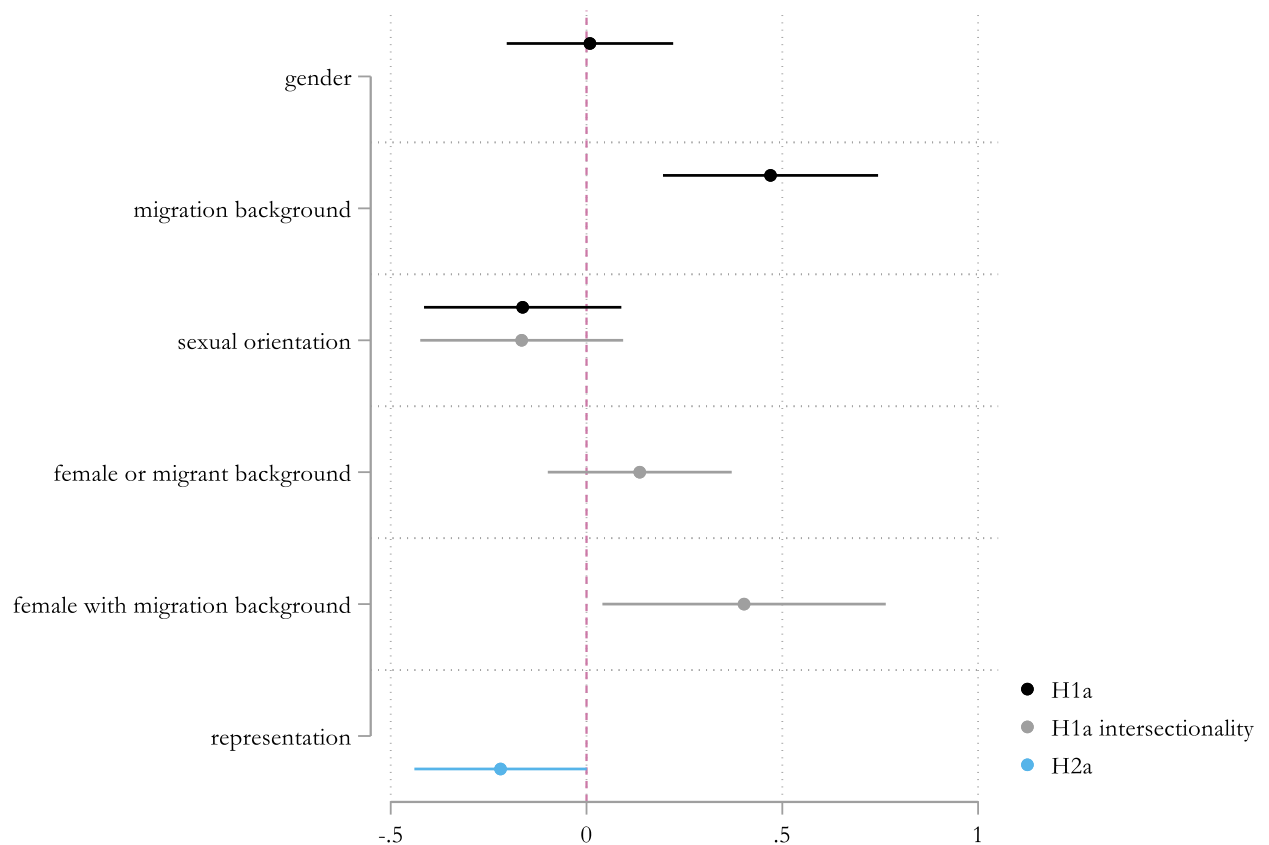
*Table 3: (Perceived) description of teachers*

	<b>Female teachers</b>	<b>Teachers with migration background</b>	<b>Non-heterosexual teachers</b>
<b>None</b>	0 %	20.8%	31.3%
<b>Below 5%</b>	0%	38.0%	52.34%
<b>5 - 9%</b>	0.4%	28.4%	14.02%
<b>10 - 25%</b>	0%	12.4%	2.34%
<b>26 – 50%</b>	34.13%	0.4%	0%
<b>51 – 75%</b>	62.70%	0%	0%
<b>Over 75%</b>	2.78%	0%	0%

## Results

Figure 3 gives a more detailed presentation of our results testing the first two hypotheses. The full regression results are presented in Table A2 in the Appendix.

*Figure 3: Coefficient plot of models 1, 2, and 4 testing H1a and H2a*



Notes: 95% confidence intervals, all models controlled for age. Full results are in the Appendix.

The results provide mixed support to H1a. They suggest that there is no difference in the experience of discriminatory behaviour for female respondents or respondents who report being homosexual. However, we see a clear positive relationship between individuals with a migration background and their experiences of discrimination. Having a migration background increases discrimination by approx. 0.5 points on our discrimination index (1-5). This effect remains robust and significant amongst virtually all models. Moreover, we find a direct effect of intersectionality in Model 2: being a female with a migration background is significantly and



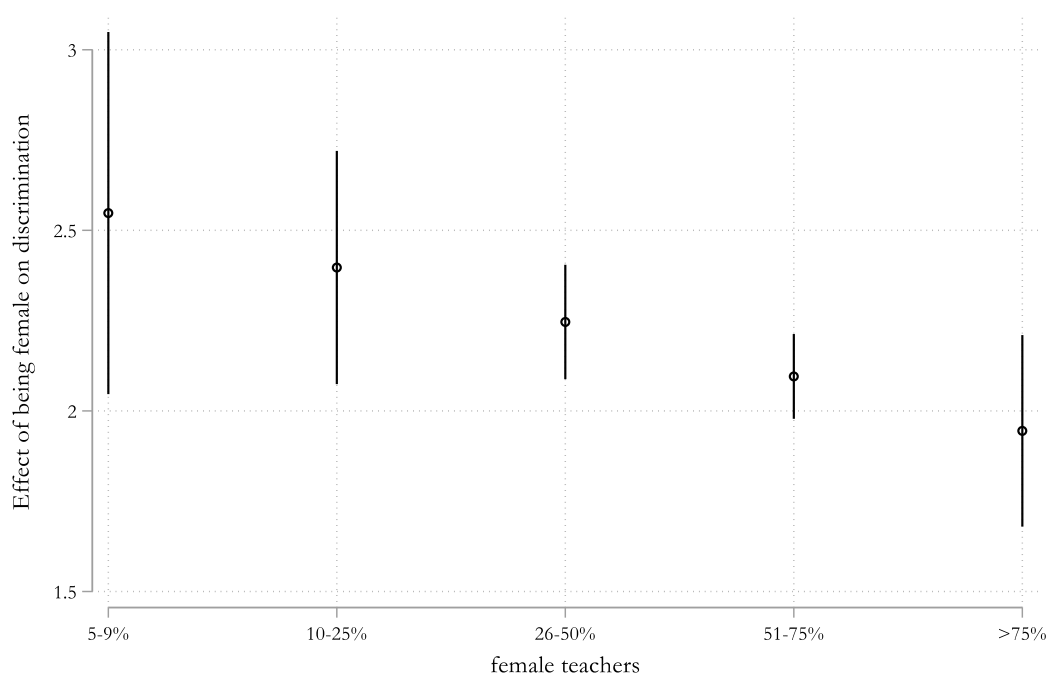
positively associated with experiences of discrimination at school.

To test the assumption from Hypothesis 2a – that discrimination will be reduced if student characteristics are shared with teachers – we estimated a model including a variable for the representation between students and teachers. The variable takes a value of 1 if, for example, female students are matched with a large share of female teachers. On the other hand, representation is 0 if, for example, male students are in a surrounding of mainly female teachers. This model is visualized through the blue line in Figure 3.

We see that more representation through teachers indeed decreases experienced discrimination. If represented by teachers, discrimination decreases by approx. 0.4 points on the discrimination scale. However, this effect narrowly fails to be statistically significant at the 5 per cent confidence level ( $p=0.051$ ). In addition, we want to test the multiplicative interaction effect between individual characteristics and the share of teachers with this characteristic (H2b), which is an alternative test for the representation hypothesis. Table A2 in the Appendix reveals a negative and significant interaction coefficient. This result reveals that being a female in a primarily female context significantly reduces experiences of discrimination.

Figure 4 graphically displays this relationship. The graph and the constituent term for 'female' further show that being a female in a purely male context, i.e. 0% of females, increases discrimination by 2.07 on our discrimination index from 1 to 5. This positive effect, however, decreases as the share of female teachers increases. Accordingly, we find support for our hypothesis that representation can decrease gender-based discrimination.

*Figure 4: Interaction between gender and percentage of female teachers*



Another important question of this paper was whether there is a multiplicative effect of individual characteristics (tested with interactions), i.e. if discrimination increases when a person is both female and has a discrimination background or if one characteristic levels the other out (H1b). However, we do not find support for H1b, which posited an interaction effect of student identity (Model 3 in Table A2 in the Appendix). To be clear, The effect of a student's migration background on their likelihood to experience discriminatory treatment at school does not depend on their gender or vice versa.

From Model 3, we can conclude that there is no multiplicative effect between being female and having a migration background, as the interaction effect is insignificant. Yet, Model 3 reveals, that male students with an immigration background are significantly more likely to be discriminated against, as seen by the significant constitutive coefficient of migration background. It reflects the effect of immigration background while gender equals zero, i.e. being male. Having an immigration background and being male increases discrimination by 0.75 points on our discrimination scale. On the other hand, being a female without an

immigration background does not make discrimination more or less likely as shown by the non-significant coefficient for females.

Lastly, we tested the interaction between having a migration background and the share of teachers with a migration background, which does not reveal a significant finding. In other words, discrimination based on one's migration background is not increased or decreased by representation. In summary, H2b is supported for gender representation but not for representation based on migration background.

Our third set of hypotheses posits a discrete effect of teacher diversity, independent of levels of representation or student identity. We test a direct effect of individual teacher characteristics in Table A2, Model 7, and teacher intersectionality in Model 8, but results find no support for H3a. Teachers' gender and migration background do not impact experienced discrimination. Finally, in Model 9 we test whether there is an interaction effect between teachers' migration background and gender, but we find no evidence supporting H3b. In sum, levels of teacher diversity themselves do not affect students' students experiences of discrimination in our sample.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

This paper contributes to understanding bureaucratic discrimination and representative bureaucracy in three key ways. Firstly, it examines students' subjective discrimination experiences across multiple dimensions, including assessment, punishment, support, and their overall relationship and trust in teachers. Secondly, it explores the effects of both student and teacher diversity, mainly focusing on gender and migration backgrounds. Lastly, it models the intersectionality effects of both students and teachers.

Our findings, based on a Southern German student sample, reveal that students with a migration

background face more discrimination, especially male students. Gender-based discrimination is less evident, but female representation among teachers appears to reduce discrimination for female students. However, we found no significant impact of teacher diversity on discrimination experiences.

While this study has an explorative character, it faces several limitations, such as reliance on retrospective data from a small, relatively homogenous sample of social science students, which may not fully represent the actual school representation and limits the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, our sample's limited diversity constrained our ability to test intersectional patterns thoroughly. Despite these limitations, the study marks a significant advancement in integrating intersectionality into the study of bureaucratic representation and discrimination. It moves beyond identifying who faces discrimination to understanding how intersectionality and representation influence these experiences. Our results indicate that merely increasing teacher diversity is insufficient; representation and student intersectionality are crucial. Notably, gender representation seems more effective than other forms, but there's a concerning lack of remedies for discrimination experienced by male students with a migration background. Given their formative influence, these insights underscore the need for more attention on discrimination in schools. Future research should expand to more diverse samples of other forms of street-level bureaucracy and further explore intersectional patterns of representation and organizational context.

## References

- Adam, C., Fernández-i-Marín, X., James, O., Manatschal, A., Rapp, C., and E. Thomann. 2021. "Differential Discrimination against Mobile EU Citizens: Experimental Evidence from Bureaucratic Choice Settings." *Journal of European Public Policy* 28(5): 742-760.
- Bearfield, D.A. 2009. "Equity at the Intersection: Public Administration and the Study of Gender." *Public Administration Review* 69: 383-386.
- Bernstein, R. S., Bulger, M., Salipante, P., & Weisinger, J. Y. 2020. "From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions." *Journal of Business Ethics* 167(3): 395-410.
- Bradbury, Mark, and J. Edward Kellough. 2011. "Representative Bureaucracy: Assessing the Evidence on Active Representation." *The American Review of Public Administration* 41(2): 157-167.
- Breslin, R. A., Pandey, S., & Riccucci, N. M. 2017. "Intersectionality in Public Leadership Research: A Review and Future Research Agenda." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 37(2): 160-182.
- Cole, E. R. 2009. "Intersectionality and Research in Psychology." *American Psychologist* 64(3): 170-180.
- Crenshaw, K. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 139-167.
- Dahl, Malte, and Niels Krog. 2018. "Experimental Evidence of Discrimination in the Labour Market: Intersections between Ethnicity, Gender, and Socio-Economic Status." *European Sociological Review* 34(4): 402-417.
- Dolan, Julie, and David H. Rosenbloom. 2003. *Representative Bureaucracy: Classic Readings and Continuing Controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Dovidio, J. F., Hewstone, M., Glick, P., and V. M. Esses. 2010. *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*. London: SAGE.
- Fay, D. L., Hicklin Fryar, A., Meier, K. J., & Wilkins, V. 2021. "Intersectionality and Equity: Dynamic Bureaucratic Representation in Higher Education." *Public Administration* 99(2): 335-352.
- Fernandez, Sergio, Koma, Samuel, and Hongseok Lee. 2018. "Establishing the Link between Representative Bureaucracy and Performance: The South African Case." *Governance* 31(3): 535-553.
- Frederickson, H. G. 2015. *Social Equity and Public Administration: Origins, Developments, and Applications*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hancock, A.-M. 2007. "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm." *Perspectives on Politics* 5(1): 63-79.
- Headley, Andrea M., and James E. Wright. 2020. "Is Representation Enough? Racial Disparities in Levels of Force and Arrests by Police." *Public Administration Review* 80(6): 1051-

1062.

- Hong, S. 2017. "Black in Blue: Racial Profiling and Representative Bureaucracy in Policing Revisited." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 27(4): 547-561.
- Jensen, C., and K. Van Kersbergen. 2016. *The Politics of Inequality*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Kennedy, Brandy. 2014. "Unraveling Representative Bureaucracy: A Systematic Analysis of the Literature." *Administration & Society* 46(4): 395-421.
- Krislov, S. 1974. *Representative Bureaucracy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lipsky, M. 1980. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russell Sage.
- McCall, L. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1771-1800.
- Meier, K. J. 1984. "Teachers, Students, and Discrimination: The Policy Impact of Black Representation." *The Journal of Politics* 46(1): 252-263.
- Meier, K. J., & Nigro, L. G. 1976. "Representative Bureaucracy and Policy Preferences: A Study in the Attitudes of Federal Executives." *Public Administration Review* 36(4): 458-469.
- Meier, Kenneth J., Wrinkle, R. D., and Polinard, J. L. 1999. "Representative Bureaucracy and Distributional Equity: Addressing the Hard Question." *The Journal of Politics* 61(4): 1025-1039.
- Meier, K. J. 2019. "Theoretical Frontiers in Representative Bureaucracy: New Directions for Research." *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 2(1): 39-56.
- Mosher, F. C. 1968. *Democracy and the Public Service*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nicholson-Crotty, S., Nicholson-Crotty, J., and S. Fernandez. 2017. "Will More Black Cops Matter? Officer Race and Police-Involved Homicides of Black Citizens." *Public Administration Review* 77(2): 206-216.
- Olsen, A. L., Kyhse-Andersen, J. H., and D. Moynihan. 2021. "The Unequal Distribution of Opportunity: A National Audit Study of Bureaucratic Discrimination in Primary School Access." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Pager, D., and H. Shepherd. 2008. "The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 181-209.
- Pedersen, M. J., Stritch, J. M., and F. Thuesen. 2018. "Punishment on the Frontlines of Public Service Delivery: Client Ethnicity and Caseworker Sanctioning Decisions in a Scandinavian Welfare State." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28(3): 339-354.
- Raaphorst, N., Ashikali, T., & Groeneveld, S. 2024. "Active Representation and Equal Treatment: The Influence of Bureaucrats' Social Background on Discrimination." *Social Policy & Administration* 1-17.

- Riccucci, Norma M., and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. 2017. "Representative Bureaucracy: A Lever to Enhance Social Equity, Coproduction, and Democracy." *Public Administration Review* 77(1): 21-30.
- Schram, Sanford F., Soss, Joe, Fording, Richard C., and Linda Houser. 2009. "Deciding to Discipline: Race, Choice, and Punishment at the Frontlines of Welfare Reform." *American Sociological Review* 74(3): 398-422.
- Thomann, Eva, James, Oliver, & Deruelle, Thibaud. 2024. "Interventions to Reduce Bureaucratic Discrimination: A Systematic Review of Empirical Behavioural Research." *Public Management Review* 1-28.
- Moseley, A., & Thomann, E. 2021. "A Behavioural Model of Heuristics and Biases in Frontline Policy Implementation." *Policy & Politics* 49(1): 49-67.
- Webeck, S., & Lee, H. 2022. "The Behavioral Foundations of Representative Bureaucracy." *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*.
- Xu, Xiaoyang, and Kenneth J. Meier. 2021. "Separating Symbolic and Active Representation: A Mixed Methods Study of Gender and Education in China." *Public Management Review* 24(9): 1429-1451.

## Appendix

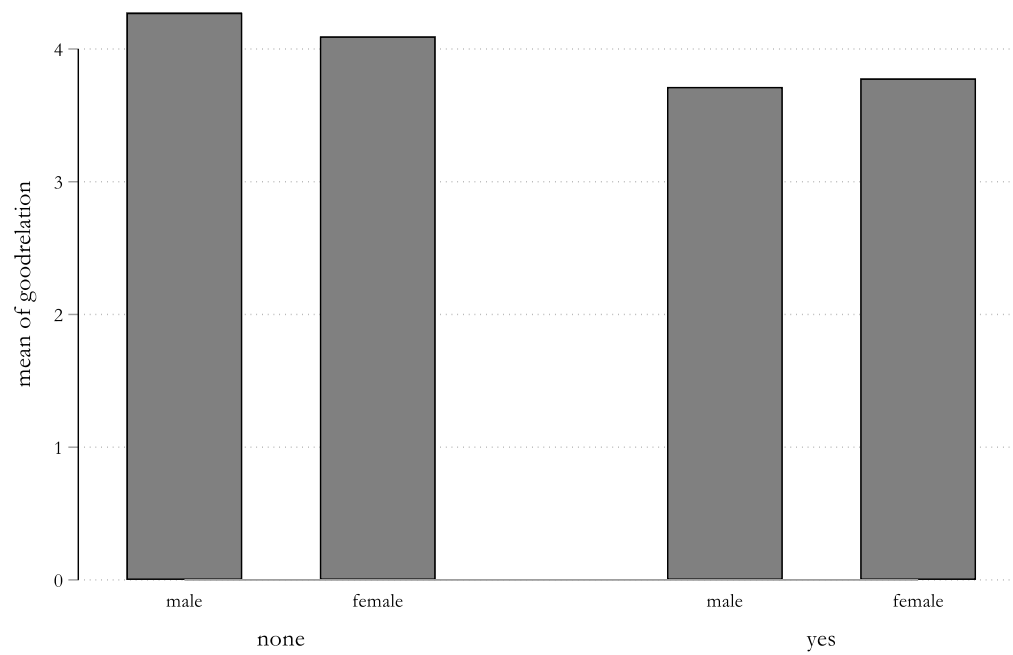
*Table A1: Maximum likelihood factor analysis of dependent variables*

Variable	Factor1	Uniqueness
Relationship (good)	-0.6754	0.5439
Trust	-0.5826	0.6606
General unfair treatment	0.7573	0.4266
Punishment	0.7891	0.3773
Assessment	0.7472	0.4417
Support	0.8017	0.3574

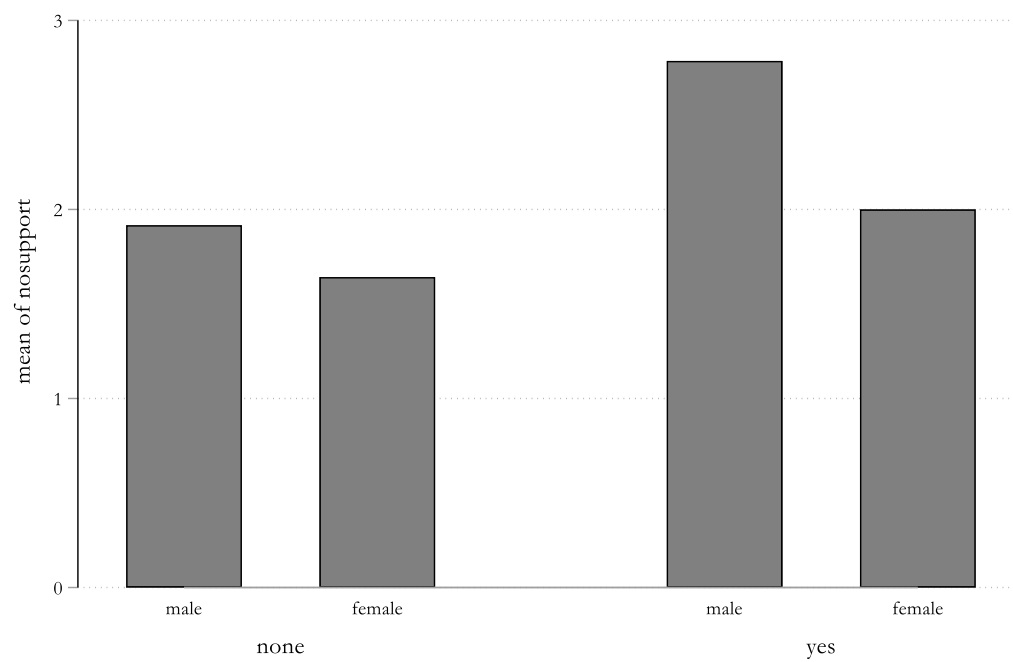
(Note: Blanks represent  $\text{abs}(\text{loading}) < .3$ )



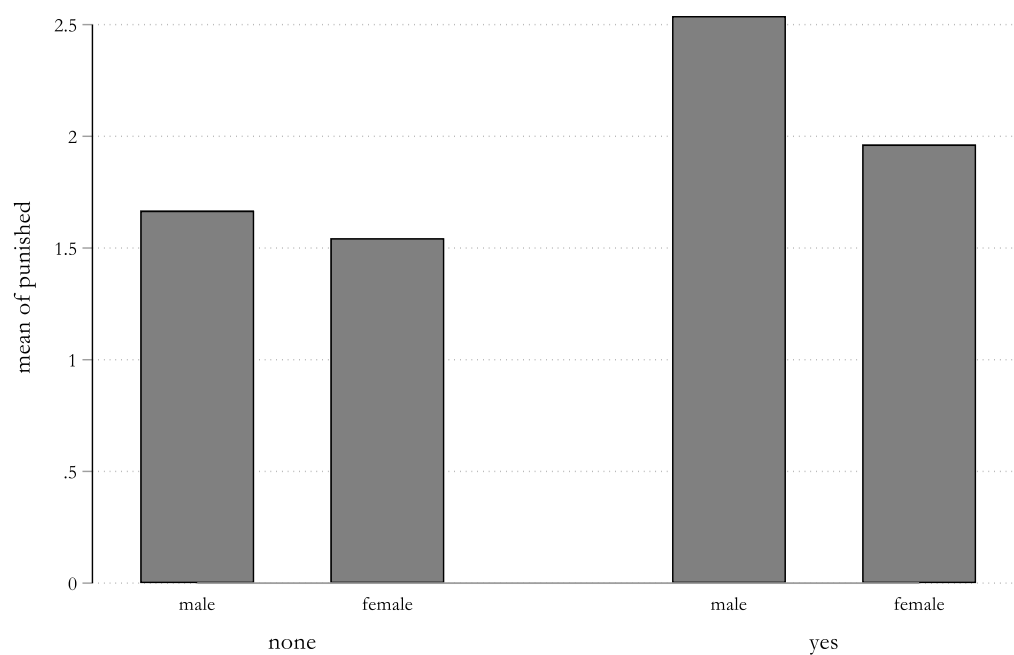
*Figure A1: Distribution of relationship by gender (male/female) and migration background (none/yes)*



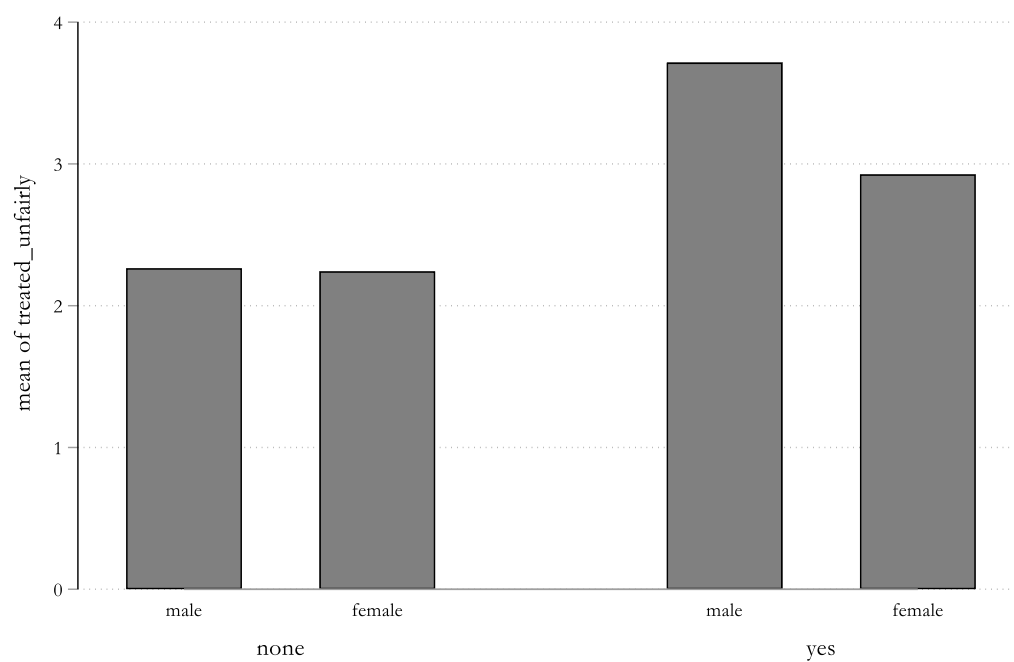
*Figure A2: Distribution of support by gender (male/female) and migration background (none/yes)*



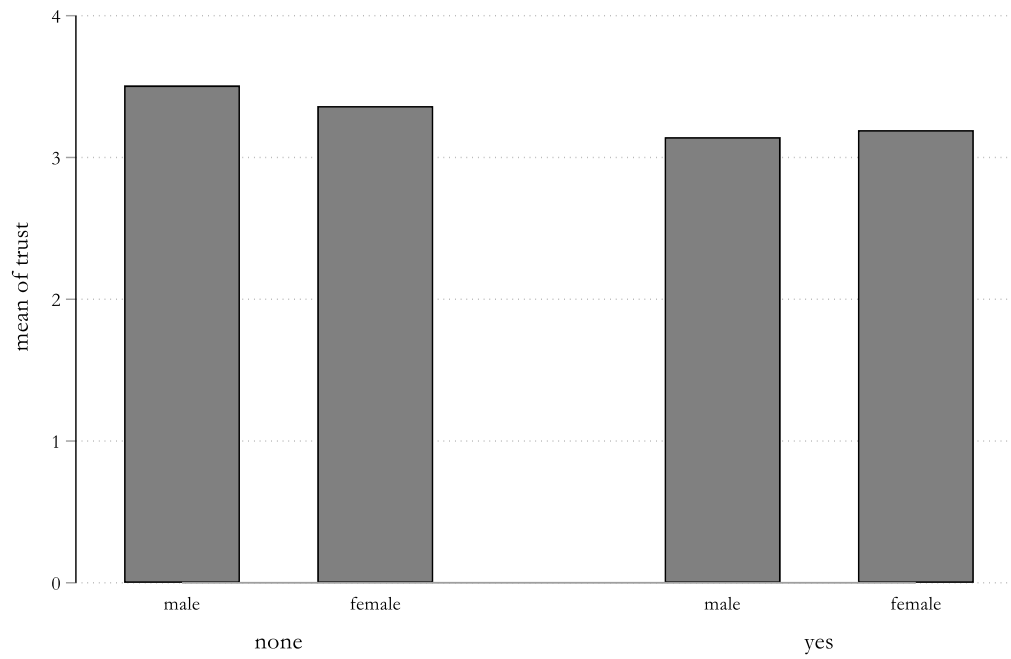
*Figure A3: Distribution of punishment by gender (male/female) and migration background (none/yes)*



*Figure A4: Distribution of general unfair treatment by gender (male/female) and migration background (none/yes)*



*Figure A5: Distribution of trust by gender (male/female) and migration background (none/yes)*



*Figure A6: Distribution of assessment by gender (male/female) and migration background (none/yes)*

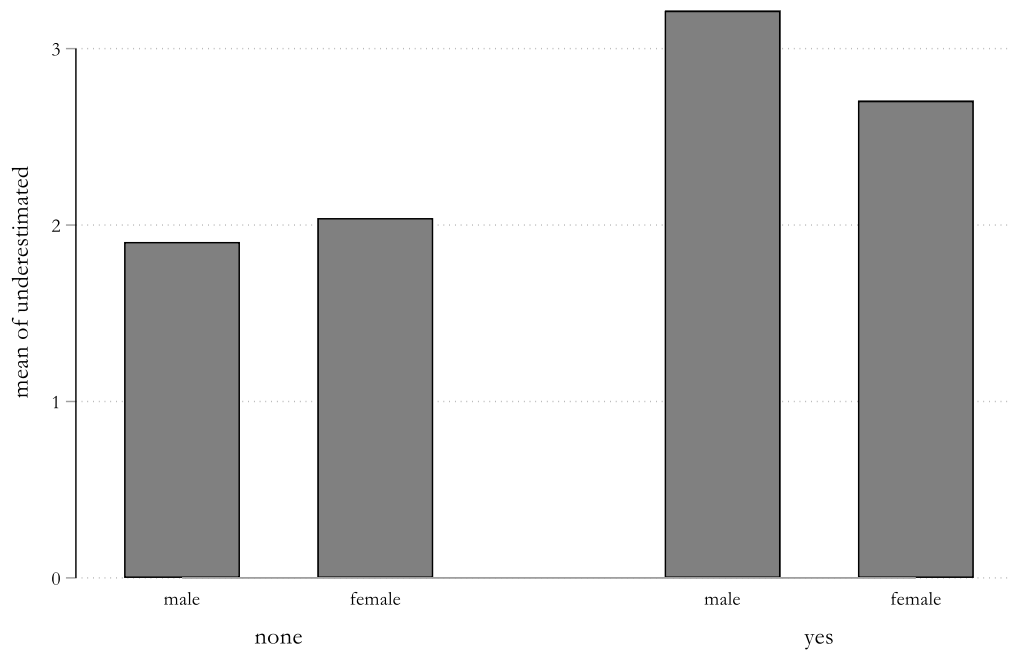


Table A2: Multiple regression models

	(1) H1a	(2) H1a intersectionality	(3) H1b	(4) H2a	(5) H2b gender	(6) H2b migration	(7) H3a	(8) H3a intersec	(9) H3b
Gender (female)	0.01 (0.11)		0.08 (0.12)		<b>2.04*</b> <b>(0.91)</b>	0.05 (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)	0.01 (0.11)	0.05 (0.11)
Migration	<b>0.47***</b> <b>(0.14)</b>		<b>0.76**</b> <b>(0.24)</b>		<b>0.47***</b> <b>(0.14)</b>	0.27 (0.24)	<b>0.45**</b> <b>(0.14)</b>	<b>0.47***</b> <b>(0.14)</b>	<b>0.46**</b> <b>(0.14)</b>
Heterosexual	-0.16 (0.13)	-0.17 (0.13)	-0.13 (0.13)		-0.16 (0.13)	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.15 (0.13)	-0.16 (0.13)	-0.15 (0.13)
Age	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Female or migrant <sup>x</sup>		0.14 (0.12)							
Female and migrant		<b>0.40*</b> <b>(0.18)</b>							
Gender (female)*migration			-0.43 (0.30)						
Representation				-0.22 (0.11)					
Teachers % female					0.11 (0.16)	-0.15 (0.09)	-0.16 (0.09)		-0.24 (0.16)
Gender*teachers % female					<b>-0.43*</b> <b>(0.20)</b>				
Teachers migration					0.03 (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)		-0.26 (0.45)
Migration*teachers migration						0.12 (0.14)			
Intersectionality teacher (diversity measure)								-0.01 (0.05)	
% Female teachers*									0.06 (0.09)
% Migrant teachers									<b>2.76***</b> <b>(0.82)</b>
Intercept	1.83*** (0.45)	1.72*** (0.46)	1.72*** (0.45)	1.97*** (0.47)	1.19 (0.82)	2.34*** (0.62)	2.39*** (0.62)	1.88*** (0.56)	
N	242	242	242	223	240	240	240	240	240
r <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.03	0.07	0.02	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.07

Standard errors in parentheses, \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .00$ ; <sup>x</sup> Ref. cat: male without migration background.