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# WHY DO ADOLESCENTS ENGAGE IN ETHNIC BULLYING? THE ROLE OF PARENTS' PREJUDICE AND SCHOOL CONTEXT

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## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

**Ethnic bullying** (Elamè, 2013) is the new form of bullying that has spread in Europe over the last years.

Children are susceptible to stereotypes from early ages (McKnow & Weinstein, 2003) → the **influence of parents** as their first socialization agents, is explained in terms of social learning and attitudes transmission (Aboud & Amato, 2001).

Transmission of parents' prejudiced beliefs to their children (see meta-analysis Degner & Dalege, 2013) → no study has examined the effect that prejudiced parents has on their children's **behaviours**.

**School environment:** buffering effect on this relation

- regulatory context that structures relations between youth from different groups (Nipedal, Nesdale, & Killen, 2010)
- young people display behaviours that are in line with the social norms of the context (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986).

## AIMS

- Examine the link between **family prejudiced beliefs** and adolescents' involvement in **ethnic bullying** (controlling for immigrant status, and student's own prejudice toward immigrants).
- Examine the role of **tolerant school context** in adolescents' engagement in ethnic bullying.
- Investigate whether specific classroom contexts **moderate** the link between family's prejudiced beliefs and adolescents' engagement in ethnic bullying.



PRIN Project

"Prejudicial bullying involving ethnic groups:  
Understanding mechanisms and translating  
knowledge into effective interventions"

## SAMPLE

- 12 high schools from Tuscany (Italy)
- 37 classrooms
- 582 adolescents (9<sup>th</sup> graders;  $M_{age} = 15.23$ ;  $SD = 0.65$ ; 50.9% girls)
- 72 teachers ( $M_{age} = 47.66$ ;  $SD = 10.59$ ; 79.2% females)



## MAIN MEASURES

### INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

**PERCEIVED FAMILY PREJUDICE:** 8-item from the Adapted scale "Attitude toward out-groups" (Stephan et al., 1999).

**STUDENT'S PREJUDICE:** 4-item *Xenophobia's* subscale from "Tolerance and Xenophobia scale" (van Zalk et al., 2013).

### CLASS-LEVEL VARIABLES

**CLASS TOLERANCE:** Adolescents' aggregated responses to the 4-item *Tolerance's* subscale (van Zalk et al., 2013) for each sample class.

**CLASS TEACHERS' TOLERANCE:** Teachers' aggregated responses to the *Tolerance* subscale (van Zalk et al., 2013) weighed for the hour of work in each class.

## RESULTS

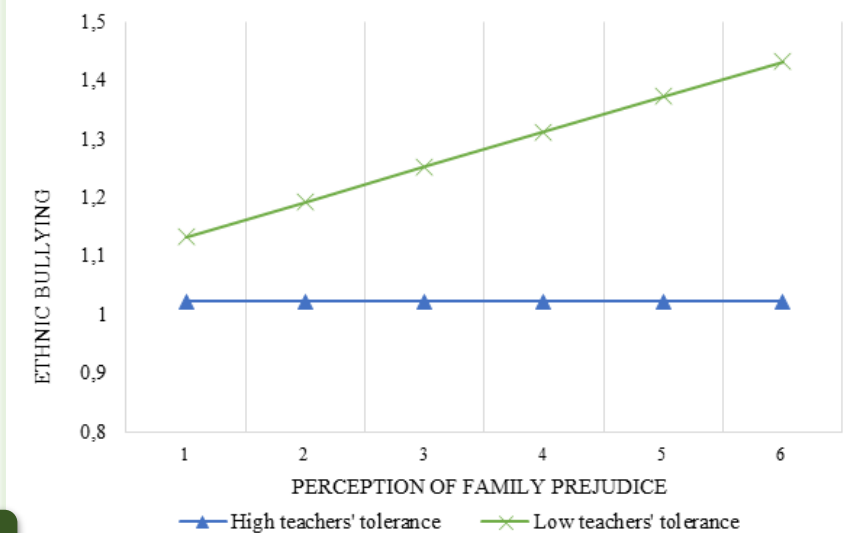


Figure 2. Moderation model.

In classes with low levels of teachers' tolerance, the perception of family prejudice is significantly associated with ethnic bullying. Conversely, classes with high levels of teachers' tolerance, the perception of family prejudice is no longer a risk factor for ethnic bullying.

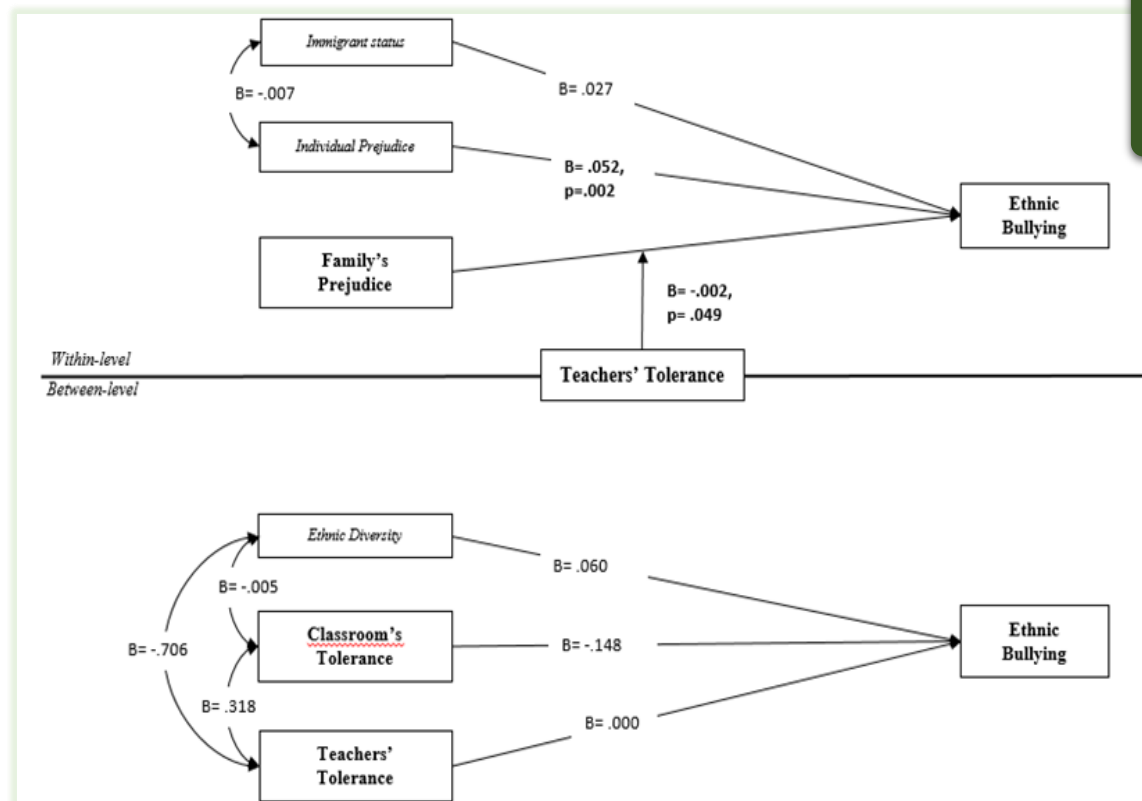


Figure 1. Multilevel moderation model.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Teachers' attitudes towards ethnic diversity buffer the effect of family prejudice on students' behaviour:

- also teachers are important role models for students (Vezzali et al., 2012).
- contextual reinforcement on adolescents' perceptions and consequent behaviours.

Our results open a promising direction about the **importance of fostering a context that values diversity and encourage multicultural relations as a mean to hinder prejudicial influences.**

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