The relationship between discriminatory attitudes toward gender and cultural/ethnic diversity and participation in bullying situations: a study with Portuguese and Spanish adolescents

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One of the limitations of research on bullying is the difficulty to understand the relationship between bullying and relevant categories of identity in a cultural context (Carrera, Lameiras, Rodríguez & Vallejo, 2013; Garandeau, Wilson & Rodkin, 2010).

The aim of this study was to assess the combined influence of gender and ethnic-biased attitudes on bullying behaviour. The sample was composed of 2,410 Spanish (58.3%) and Portuguese (47.1%) students from Galicia and Minho (transborders regions in the northwest of Spain and Portugal). The students were 13 to 19 years old (M = 15.13; 53.7% girls and 46.3% boys) Measures of bullying accounted for the differing participant roles. Attitudes and personality scales measured hostile and benevolent sexism, attitudes towards gender-nonconforming boys and girls, attitudes towards gays and lesbians, instrumental and expressive gender traits, as well as attitudes towards minority ethnic groups. Data showed that bullying is explained by negative behaviours towards gender-nonconforming girls and boys, high levels of instrumentality and hostile sexism, low levels of expressiveness and benevolent sexism, positive attitudes toward lesbians, and more stereotyped attitudes towards minority groups. Empirical evidence is suggestive that bullying is beyond a deliberate act of victimization. Rather, when the frame is widened to a sociocultural dimension, peer bullying enmeshes in the heteronormative and gender non-conforming identities and ethnic-biased attitudes.

Acknowledging the strongly gendered and racialized nature of bullying is an important step toward a more comprehensive understanding and a better prevention of the situation, even assuming that it is complex and multi-factorial (Carrera, DePalma & Lameiras, 2011; Carrera et al., 2013). This highlights the need to include gender components in prevention and intervention programs. Such elements should be aimed at recognizing the constructed nature of gender roles and stereotypes and promoting their greater flexibility as well as the development of positive attitudes toward gender and cultural/ethnic diversity.

References

