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## Title Registration for a Systematic Review: Universal Preschool- and School-based Education Programmes for Reducing Ethnic Prejudice and Promoting Respect for Diversity among Children Aged 3-11: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

**Ciara Keenan, Paul Connolly and Clifford Stevenson**

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# **UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL- AND SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR REDUCING ETHNIC PREJUDICE AND PROMOTING RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY AMONG CHILDREN AGED 3-11: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND META-ANALYSIS**

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## **BACKGROUND**

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Ethnic prejudice is defined as an attitude, usually negative, directed towards another ethnic group.<sup>1</sup> Prejudice is extremely variable both in nature and presentation and comprises three major elements: 1) a cognitive component; 2) an emotional component; and 3) a behavioural component (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). The behavioural component of prejudice is most often referred to as discrimination and usually describes a display of adverse behaviour towards a person of a different ethnic background. Behaviour may be explicit or implicit and also either intended or unintended and can range from overt acts of violence, exclusion, and/or name calling through to more subtle and possibly unintended actions that nevertheless have adverse consequences for those from particular ethnic groups.

Research in this area most often concerns itself with the scholarly investigation of the measurement, meaning, aetiology and consequences of prejudice and discrimination on society. Ethnic prejudice arises from an individual making an unfavourable evaluation of a person based upon the ethnic group they belong to; the discriminatory behavioural consequence of this is not only destructive to the social growth of the victim, but also debilitating to the perpetrator (Aboud et al. 2012).

A large body of research evidence, spanning almost a century, has provided clear and consistent evidence that children are able to recognise ethnic difference and display ethnic prejudices towards others from the age of three (Aboud, 1988; Aboud & Levy, 2000; Milner, 1983). The mechanism by which these prejudices are initially learned remains an actively researched question, as are the interventions designed to enhance inclusion and promote respect for diversity (see below). Social learning theory (Bandura & McClelland, 1977) would suggest that prejudice is learned in the same way any other attitude or value is learned; through modelling of behaviour, association of the group with a negative stereotype, and reinforcement of the occurrence of this behaviour. However, in the 1960s, cognitive-developmental theory emerged as a way of explaining the inner development of prejudice and particularly how the internal cognitive changes that occur during development impact upon how children view others as well as how their own self-concept emerges.

The dimensions of scholarship relating to ethnic prejudice are extraordinary, containing sophisticated concepts and theories that are indicative of the decades of active exploration.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “ethnic group” refers to any social group that regard themselves as distinctive, and who also are regarded by others as distinctive, due to sharing common ancestral, social, cultural or national background. The definition includes those groups defined in terms of “race”.

These considerations of the themes associated with racial and ethnic prejudices have led to a body of literature rich in methodological intricacies and theoretical complexity which have in turn produced a large number of educational approaches aimed at reducing prejudice and discrimination and promoting inclusive behaviour in children. This systematic review will seek to synthesis the findings of those studies that have attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of preschool- and school-based educational programmes and interventions aimed at reducing ethnic prejudice and promoting respect for diversity among children aged 3-11.

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## **OBJECTIVES**

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The core research question for this proposed review is: What role can schools play in reducing ethnic prejudices and promoting respect for diversity among children aged 3-11?

Within this, the review will address the following more specific questions:

- 1) To what extent can school-based education programmes assist in reducing ethnic prejudice and promoting respect for diversity?
- 2) Is there a relationship between ethnic prejudice reduction and an increase in respect for diversity?
- 3) Which school-based programmes are most effective in reducing ethnic prejudice and promoting respect for diversity and which characteristics may influence their efficacy?
- 4) Do the effectiveness of programmes vary with regard to the children's age, gender, socio-economic background and racial/ethnic background?
- 5) How do the findings of these intervention studies contribute to our understanding of the nature and impact of ethnicity in children's lives?

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## **EXISTING REVIEWS**

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An initial search has identified many reviews on the constructs of racial prejudice and there have been a significant number of evaluations conducted on interventions aimed at reducing ethnic prejudice and promoting respect for diversity. While a number of literature reviews currently exist, a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of these school based intervention programs on reducing ethnic and racial prejudice in children aged 3-11 is warranted as these existing reviews:

- Tend not to be systematic

Beelmann and Heinemann (2014), for example, report results of a meta-analysis on 81 research reports containing 122 structured intervention programmes designed to promote positive intergroup contact and prejudice production in children and teenagers. However, this meta-analysis was not carried out alongside a systematic review.

- Tend not to use meta-analytic techniques

A systematic review by Aboud et al. (2012) sought to evaluate the effects of reducing ethnic prejudice in young children. Following searching, 32 studies were screened for overall effects on attitudes and peer relations following the intervention. Unfortunately, this systematic review did not include a meta-analysis of the 32 final studies included and so the strength of findings were merely estimated by comparing effects based on codings of positive, non-significant and negative. The review also did not exclude those studies where the age was not made explicit. It is therefore possible that effects reported within this systematic review may then have been due to inclusion of children older than 8 years.

- Are not always specific to education

Paluck & Green (2009), for example, presented an extended review of the practice of prejudice reduction techniques across all settings, populations and methodologies. Over a five year period the authors searched published and unpublished reports and provide readers with the most comprehensive database of prejudice reduction techniques to date. This database is available at; [www.betsylevypaluck.com](http://www.betsylevypaluck.com). However, this review was not systematic in its approach and could be described as too broad as it covered the entire range of interventions with both children and with adults across various settings including laboratories and field experiments and so any final conclusions on the efficacy of a intervention within the educational system are impossible to reach.

- Tend to be focused on one particular intervention technique

Dovido, Gaertner & Kawakami (2003), for example, are very specific in their review that looks at the history and development of the contact hypothesis. Within this they identify themes and promote further research into identifying which features of the contact theory are necessary to increase efficacy and reduce bias. Similarly, Brown & Zagefka (2011) reviewed work inspired by the acculturation framework and looked more specifically at that relationship in terms of a dynamic intergroup process. Also, Curry, De Amicis & Gilligan (2010) have registered a protocol with the Campbell Collaboration for a review that focuses specifically on the effects of cooperative learning on inter-ethnic relations in school settings.

- Are focused on more general outcomes such as social exclusion

Abrams & Killen (2014), for example, focused on 12 specific papers to look at how the social exclusion of children can develop into prejudice. Similarly, Bennett (2014) also compiled a

literature review on social exclusion in children and calls for research on the role that social identity plays in the understanding of inclusion and exclusion.

- Are interested in the construct of prejudice rather than interventions
- Phelan, Link & Dovidio (2008), for example, compared 18 models of stigma and prejudice in order to explore the commonalities and distinctions between the two concepts.

Overall, therefore, whilst there are many narrative reviews into individual programmes, outcomes of prejudice and constructs of prejudice there are far fewer which systematically review and assess all those prejudice reduction programmes currently being used in the field for children aged 3-11 . This proposed review will be wide-ranging and inclusive in seeking to compare the effectiveness of all school-based approaches to reducing ethnic prejudice and promoting respect for diversity among children aged 3-11.

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## **INTERVENTION**

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Interventions which will be included within this systematic review will be any universal school-based intervention delivered on a whole-class basis in a preschool and/or school setting to children aged 3-11 and that include an explicit objective of either reducing ethnic prejudice and/or promoting respect for ethnic diversity.

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## **POPULATION**

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Children aged 3-11 served within an education system.

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## **OUTCOMES**

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Two primary outcomes will provide the focus for this review:

- 1) A reduction in ethnic prejudice; and
- 2) An increase in respect for ethnic diversity.

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## **STUDY DESIGNS**

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The study designs to be included with the systematic reviews will be randomised control trials and quasi-experimental designs that include a suitably-matched control group and pre-test and post-test measures.

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## REVIEW AUTHORS

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**Lead review author:** The lead author is the person who develops and co-ordinates the review team, discusses and assigns roles for individual members of the review team, liaises with the editorial base and takes responsibility for the on-going updates of the review.

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## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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This systematic review and meta-analysis will form the basis for Keenan's PhD being undertaken through the Centre for Effective Education at Queen's University Belfast. Keenan has a three year full-time scholarship and will be responsible for all aspects of the systematic review and meta-analysis under the guidance of her two supervisors (the other two co-authors). Connolly is internationally recognized for his research on: diversity and inclusion in early childhood; and evaluating the effectiveness of educational programmes and interventions. Stevenson is a social psychologist interested in applying qualitative and quantitative methods to the understanding of how social identities are understood and enacted by group members within their broader societal context. His research spans the study of: groups and citizenship; displays of national identity in interaction; community identity, stigmatization and resilience; and collective participation and crowd behavior which is especially relevant to the current research title.

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## **FUNDING**

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The first author's scholarship is funded by the Department of Education and Learning (DEL) in Northern Ireland. The review team has also received a small grant from the Campbell Collaboration Education Coordinating Group (funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation) to help with the costs of searching and data extraction.

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## **POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

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Paul Connolly has undertaken and published a small number of trials in this area that may eventually be included in the final systematic review.

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## **PRELIMINARY TIMEFRAME**

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Submission of draft protocol: October 31, 2014

Submission of draft review: September 30, 2015

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## **AUTHOR DECLARATION**

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### **Authors' responsibilities**

By completing this form, you accept responsibility for preparing, maintaining, and updating the review in accordance with Campbell Collaboration policy. The Coordinating Group will provide as much support as possible to assist with the preparation of the review.



A draft protocol must be submitted to the Coordinating Group within one year of title acceptance. If drafts are not submitted before the agreed deadlines, or if we are unable to contact you for an extended period, the Coordinating Group has the right to de-register the title or transfer the title to alternative authors. The Coordinating Group also has the right to de-register or transfer the title if it does not meet the standards of the Coordinating Group and/or the Campbell Collaboration.

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**Form completed by: Ciara Keenan**

**Date: April 6, 2014  
and revised on  
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