

INDIVIDUAL PREJUDICE AND CLASSROOM NORMS : EXPLAINING DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR AGAINST SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH

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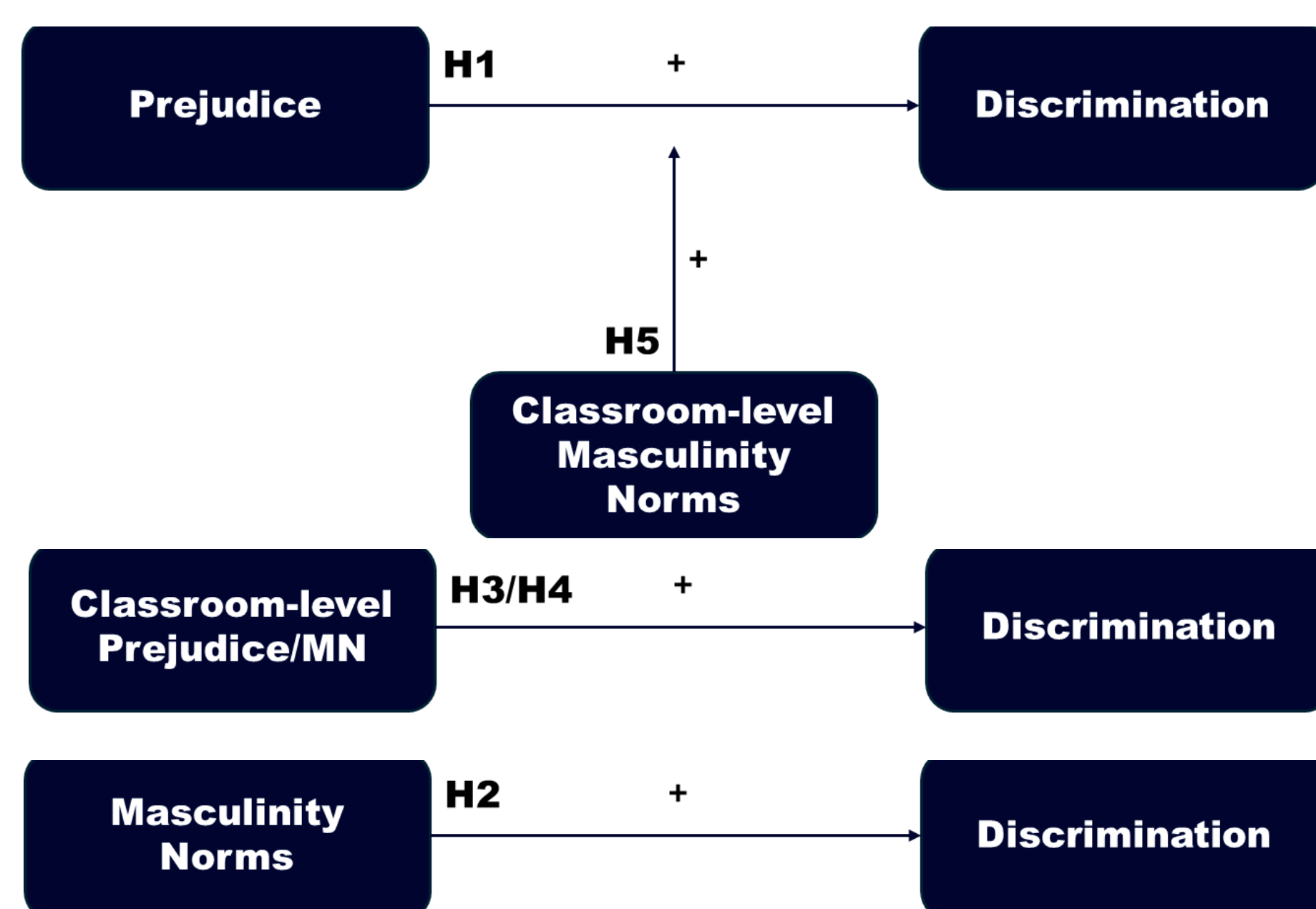
INTRODUCTION

Discrimination against sexual minorities (SM) is a prevalent occurrence during adolescence^{1,2}. As belonging to peer groups becomes central, outgroup derogation can function to strengthen ingroup cohesion or status^{3,4,5}. Bias-based discrimination negatively affects wellbeing, school climate and academic outcomes^{6,7}. Although sexual prejudice and gender norms are known predictors, their interaction within peer normative contexts remains underexplored. Drawing on Hegemonic Masculinity⁸ and Developmental Intergroup Theory⁹, it can be argued that discriminatory behavior arises from the interplay of individual prejudice, peer norms, and broader gender structures^{10,11}.

METHODOLOGY

Data: Three waves (2019, 2022, 2024) of the repeated cross-sectional survey "Lower-Saxony Survey"
Sample: N=18,479 students (9th grade, women: 48.8%, age: 14.95 years, school track: 42.4% upper, 54.3% intermediate, 3.3% low)
Dependent Variable: Discrimination of sexual minorities (0=no discrimination, 1=discrimination of other groups, 2 discrimination of SM)
Independent Variable: Prejudice against SM (-4-4, Individual-Level, group-mean centered)
Moderator: Agreement to violence legitimizing masculinity norms (1-3, classroom level, aggregated data)
Analytical Strategy: Multilevel Multinomial Logistic Regression, ML, robust SE, Average Marginal Effects

HYPOTHESES



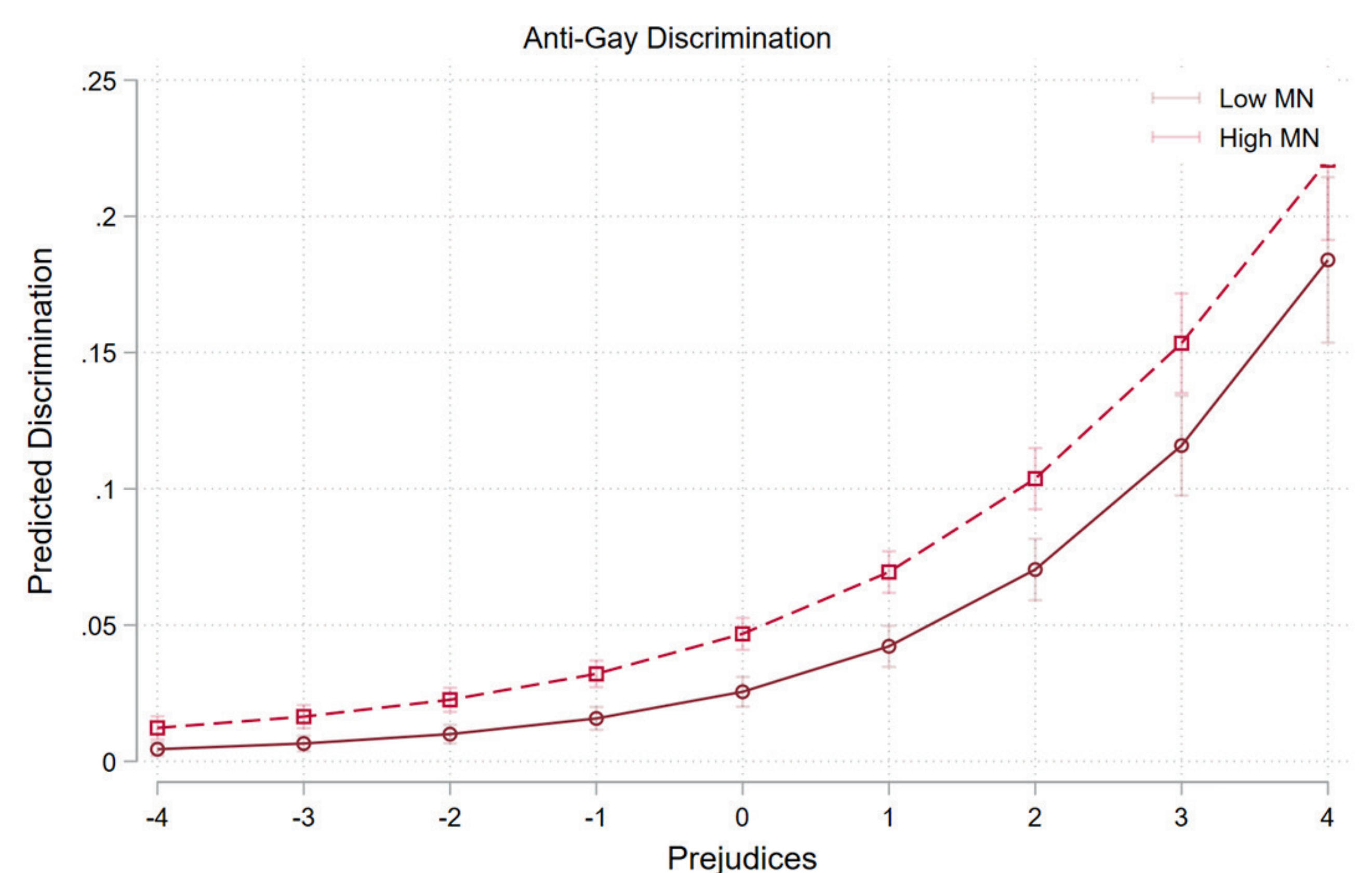
OBJECTIVE

This study examines how classroom-level masculinity norms (MN) and individual sexual prejudice jointly predict bias-based discrimination against SM. It investigates whether peer normative climate moderates the relationship between individual prejudice and discriminatory behavior.

RESULTS

- Individual Prejudice and approval of masculinity norms increase discriminatory behavior toward SM
- A classroom climate with strong masculinity norms increases discrimination
- A classroom climate with high prejudice increases discrimination
- Classroom masculinity norms amplify the positive effect of individual prejudice on discrimination
- Women are less likely to report discriminatory behavior
- Significant differences between classrooms confirm importance of the multilevel context

Figure 1 Predicted values (with 98%-CIs) for discrimination against SM depending on the classroom climate (N = 18,479; J = 1,374)



CONCLUSION/IMPLICATIONS

Discriminatory behavior toward sexual minorities is shaped by both individual attitudes and classroom-level gender norms. Beyond individual prejudice, classroom contexts characterized by strong masculinity norms and higher levels of prejudice foster discriminatory behavior, highlighting the importance of normative peer environments. Importantly, classroom masculinity norms amplify the influence of individual prejudice, suggesting that discrimination emerges most strongly when personal attitudes align with supportive normative climates. The findings are consistent with theoretical assumptions from Hegemonic Masculinity and Developmental Intergroup Theory, suggesting that discriminatory behavior arises from the interaction between individual prejudice, peer-group norms, and gendered social contexts. Accordingly, discrimination in adolescence should be understood as a context-dependent social process embedded in classroom gender regimes rather than solely as an individual disposition.

Table 1. Multilevel Multinomial Regression Predicting Discrimination against SM (N = 18,479; J = 1,374)

Predictor	b	SE	p	95% CI
Individual Prejudices	0.954	0.158	<.001	[0.644, 1.264]
Classroom Climate (MN)	1.411	0.272	<.001	[0.877, 1.945]
Interaction (Prejudice × Climate)	-0.203	0.079	.010	[-0.356, -0.049]
Classroom Prejudices	0.832	0.084	<.001	[0.667, 0.997]
Individual MN	0.810	0.061	<.001	[0.691, 0.929]
Intercept	-8.906	0.929	<.001	[-10.727, -7.085]
Var(M1: Random Intercept)	1.054	0.153		[0.793, 1.402]
Var(M2: Random Slope)	0.042	0.015		[0.021, 0.084]
Cov(M1, M2)	-0.103	0.034		[-0.169, -0.037]

Note: Gender, age, survey year, migration background and school type were included in the model as control variables but are not reported in the table

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