



Projecto de Investigação "Harmonia"
Diversidade social na escola:
Compreender, gerir e agir

Research Project "Harmonia"
Social diversity in schools:
Understanding, managing and acting



Socio-cognitive Models of Social Inclusion: Preventing Early Inter-ethnic Discrimination¹

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Abstract

Prejudice is defined as a negative evaluation of a social group or of an individual on the basis of group membership (Allport, 1954; Crandall & Eshleman, 2002). Much controversy surrounds the issue of prejudice in Western European societies. The present research project focuses on two main issues that are theoretically and socially paramount in current Developmental Social Psychology: The developmental course of prejudiced attitudes and behaviours in dominant groups against minority stigmatised groups; and the issue of reducing prejudice in children. More specifically, we examine the conditions and underlying psychological processes associated with prejudice development following socio-normative theory (Rutland, 2004; Monteiro, França, & Rodrigues, 2009). For this purpose, new methodologies are being developed to examine both explicit and implicit forms of prejudice. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the development of intervention programmes which aim to promote more equal intergroup relations between social groups. In this paper, three projects are presented to provide an overview of our research.

Research Project I: Cognitive and Normative Processes involved in Children's Regulation of Reported Ethnic Prejudice

Aim

- Investigates the role of cognitive development of the child (i.e., perspective taking) regarding prejudice development;
- Examines the role of social norms (i.e., anti-prejudice norm) regarding development of prejudice.

Hypotheses

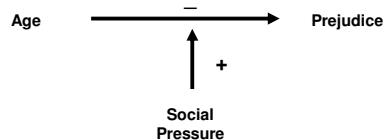
- Perceived ingroup social norms influence development of children's explicit prejudice;
- Younger (6-7 yrs) children show prejudice irrespective of the social norms;
- Older (9-11) children show no prejudice when there exist clear anti-bias norms;
- With age children are more able to take the perspective of others. This perspective-taking ability is presumed to underlie expression of ethnic prejudice.

Method

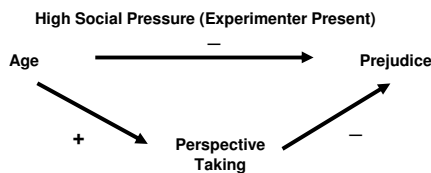
- N = 118 White-Portuguese children;
- Individual interviews (White experimenter);
- Measures: Perspective taking, perceived social norms, and intergroup attitudes;
- Accountability (i.e., social pressure) was manipulated by presence of the experimenter when completing the attitude measure (present vs. absent)

Results and Discussion

- When social pressure was high (experimenter present) older, but not younger, children show less prejudice toward Black children.



Perspective taking fully mediated expression of prejudice. With age, children become more able to take the perspective of others. This explains the result that older children show prejudice when the experimenter is absent (low social pressure) but not when the experimenter is present (high social pressure).



Research Project II: Ethnic Socialization and Parent-Child Prejudice Relationship

Aim

- Examines the association between parental prejudice and children's prejudice;
- Investigates conditions under which this association occurs;
- Explores new perspective to understand this association.

Hypotheses

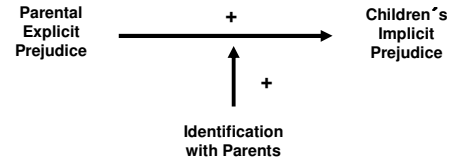
- Children's implicit prejudice is positively associated with explicit prejudice of the parents.
- The more children identify with their parents, the stronger the association between prejudice of the parents and the child.

Method

- N = 88 White-Portuguese children;
- Individual interviews (White experimenter), parents completed questionnaire;
- Measures: parental explicit prejudice, children's implicit prejudice, identification of the children with their parents (closeness).

Results and Discussion

Less prejudice toward Black people within mothers is associated with less prejudice within children, $F(3,87) = 2,352$ $p < .08$. This effect was stronger when the interaction variable was introduced in the regression, $F(3,87) = 2,352$ $p < .08$ (see figure below).



There exists a relationship between children's implicit prejudice and their parent's ethnic attitudes. This is influenced by the extent to which children identify with their parents. The more children identify with their parents, the stronger the association between children's and parental attitudes.

Research Project III: Common In-group and Dual Identity Strategies for Prejudice Reduction

Aim

- Investigates prejudice when a shared identity between subgroups (e.g., "we are all portuguese") is made salient compared to a condition in which two identities are made salient at the same time (e.g., "being White and Portuguese"; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000);
- Examines effectiveness of two superordinate categories – Portugal and School – for prejudice reduction among different status-groups (White-Portuguese children and Black-Portuguese children).

Hypotheses

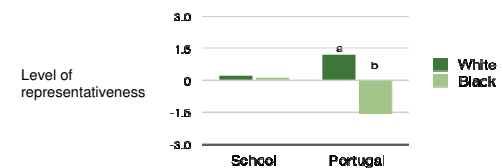
- The higher-status group (White-Portuguese) considers itself more representative to a status-related category (Portugal) than the lower-status group (Black-Portuguese), thereby increasing prejudice towards the latter.
- When a non-status related category is salient (School) the ethnic categories (White-Portuguese versus Black-Portuguese) are less important as a basis for intergroup comparisons thereby reducing prejudice.

Method

- N = 39 White-Portuguese and Black-Portuguese children (9-11 years);
- Individual interviews (White experimenter);
- Measures: association between common identity and ethnic/cultural characteristics, perceived representativity of the own and other ethnic group regarding the common identity, prejudice toward the other group.

Results and Discussion

Both White and Black children considered the category Portugal to be more associated with ethnic/cultural characteristics than the category School. Children considered White children to be more representative of Portugal than Black children. No such differences were found for the category School (see graph below). Prejudice among White children toward Black children was only found when the category Portugal was made salient.



Conclusion and Discussion

- Factors affecting development of prejudice in childhood include socio-normative aspects like parents and perceived group norms regarding prejudice, as well as cognitive aspects like perspective taking.
- The overall findings are in line with previous findings in the field of social-developmental psychology that prejudice exists in early and middle childhood.
- With age, children become more sensitive to social norms regarding prejudice (Study 1).
- Explicit (controlled) prejudice within parents is positively associated with implicit (uncontrolled) prejudice within children. Children's identification with the parents influences the association between parental and children's prejudice (Study 2).
- Making salient categories associated with ethnicity (i.e., Portugal) leads to higher prejudice among high-status (White) children toward lower status (Black) children.

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