

The Role of Ethnic Group and Country Identification in the Implicit and Explicit Ethnic Group Attitudes of Young Children

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Introduction

- Implicit in Social Identity Theory and its developmental offspring, Social Identity Development Theory (SIDT – Nesdale, 2000) is the suggestion that identification with the in-group is a key variable in inter-ethnic group attitudes.
- Theoretically, high group identification is associated with more pronounced intergroup bias.
- The link between identification and bias in children is unclear, however, and may be mediated by group variability, peer victimisation and parental attitudes (Verkuyten, 2002; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2001).
- Children exhibit differing explicit and implicit ethnic group attitudes (see Nesdale & Durkin, 1998; Nesdale, 2000; Davis & Leman, 2004) but SIDT does not suggest how the relationship between identification with the in-group and these two levels of attitude might be related.

Aims

- To explore links between identification and ethnic group bias in the developmental context
- To explore whether identification with the in-group is differentially related to implicit and explicit group bias in children

Design Considerations

- Concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'race' are problematic in the British context with a clear division between the two not always being evident.
- 'Ethnic Group' can be defined by religion, skin colour and family's country of origin.
- Study used 'ethnicity' defined by (i) societal ethnic group label ('skin colour' labelling) and (ii) family's historic country of origin.

Participants

- 112 Black (African-Caribbean heritage) and White (English heritage) British children (58 girls and 54 boys attending a multi-ethnic primary school in London, UK)
- Three age groups - 34 5-year-olds (20 Black and 14 White), 41 7-year-olds (21 Black and 20 White) 37 9-year-olds (21 Black and 16 White)

Procedure

- Children were seen on two separate occasions – three weeks apart

Phase One: Implicit Test (based on Nesdale, 2000).

- Story Memory Task incorporating 8 stereotypical traits (4 +ve and 4 -ve) for each of the two target ethnic group characters
- Video presentation of story
- Assessed via traits recalled per character



Phase Two: Explicit Test (based on the Multiple Response Racial Attitude; Doyle, Beaudet & Aboud, 1987).

- 16 stereotypical traits which could be assigned to a Black or White character in turn
- Non comparative, multi-response, order of presentation counterbalanced across the group



Phase Two: Identification Task

(Strength of Identification Scale; Barrett, in press)

Results: Implicit Task

- More consistent versus inconsistent stereotypical trait information recalled for Black character only ($t(101) = 3.27, p < .001$)
- Children's difference scores (inconsistent vs. consistent) for recall of stereotypical information regarding Black character ($F(2, 90) = 3.74, p < .05$) decreased with age

Results: Explicit Task

- More stereotype consistent vs. inconsistent traits assigned to Black character ($t(103) = 2.293, p < .05$)
- More stereotype consistent than inconsistent traits assigned to Black story character ($t(103) = 2.05, p < .05$)

Results: Implicit vs. Explicit Consistent vs. Inconsistent

Stereotype Type	Character Ethnicity	Implicit Task		Explicit Task	
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Consistent*	Black	3.25	.81	2.53	.96
Inconsistent*	Black	2.95	.91	2.30	.79
Consistent*	White	2.73	.10	2.13	1.09
Inconsistent*	White	2.91	.89	1.98	.88
Positive Consistent*	Black	1.92	.27	1.72	.60
Negative Consistent*	Black	1.32	.72	.81	.82
Positive Consistent	White	1.66	.57	1.58	.68
Negative Consistent*	White	1.29	.73	.72	.79

* Implicit vs. explicit difference significant at $p = .001$ level

Results: Strength of Identification

Participant Ethnicity	Family's historic country of origin		Societal Colour Labelling	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Black	3.99	.62	3.88	0.68
White	4.11	0.72	Not reliable	Not reliable
All	4.04	.66	3.87	.64

Results: Identification and Implicit Bias – Black Children

- Identification with Parental Ethnic Country of Origin was positively related to recall of stereotype inconsistent information regarding the Black character ($r = .463, p < .01$) and stereotype consistent information regarding the White character ($r = .304, p < .05$).
- Identification with ethnic colour label was positively related to recall of stereotype consistent ($r = .383, p < .01$) and inconsistent ($r = .296, p < .01$) information regarding Black character and stereotype consistent information regarding White character ($r = .299, p < .01$).

Results: Identification and Implicit Bias – White Children

- Identification with parental country of origin was positively related to recall of all information

Results: Identification and Explicit Bias – Black and White Children

- Identification with ethnic colour label and parental country of origin were unrelated to explicit stereotyping of either character

Summary of Findings

- All children implicitly stereotyped the Black character but not the White character
- A reliable sense of ethnic group identification based on skin colour was found for Black but not for White children
- For Black children, high identification with parental country of origin was associated with greater implicit in-group stereotyping
- For Black children, high identification with ethnic colour label associated with better memory
- For White children, high identification with parental country associated with better memory
- In-group identification was unrelated to explicit stereotyping.

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