

The Context Dependence of White Children's Racial Stereotyping

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Introduction

- Little research explores white children's stereotyping of or attitude towards their racial in-group (Spencer, 2006)
- Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) states that an individual's stereotyping of their social in-group will change with the comparative context but that self-esteem, ethnic self-identification and in-group positivity derived from these changes will remain unchanged (Turner, Oakes, Hogg, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987).
- Research shows that children's gender stereotyping varies with comparative context (Sani, Bennett, Mullally, & MacPherson, 2003; Sani & Bennett, 2001) but their national group stereotyping does not (Barrett, Wilson & Lyons, 2003). Research with adults indicates that implicit and explicit measures of ethnic and racial biasing are related to different types of behaviours - implicit attitudes are linked to nonverbal social behaviours and interaction whereas explicit attitudes are linked to more
- There is currently no published research exploring the effect of comparative context on children's racial stereotyping and no exploration of these effects in implicit and explicit tests of racial biasing which are dissociated (Baron & Banaji 2006; Davis & Leman, 2004; Rutland et al., 2005)

The Present research

Aims

- To examine the white children's stereotyping of fixed white in-group targets in a black/white and an Asian/white context
- To examine the effect of this comparative context change on the stereotyping of fixed white in-group targets
- To examine the effect of implicit vs. explicit measurement on this comparative context effect
- To examine the effect of this comparative context change on white children's positivity for in-group targets, racial self-identification and self-esteem

Participants

- 99 white English children (55 girls and 44 boys)
- 3 age groups (5-year-olds, 7-year-olds, 9-year-olds)

Method

- Children were seen in two groups – Group 1 participated in tasks with black and white targets and group 2 participated in tasks with Asian and white targets
- Each group was seen twice – each visit was separated by a 4 week gap
- In the first session they participated in the Implicit Story Memory Task (adapted Nesdale, 1999)
- In the second session they participated in the explicit attribution task (adapted Doyle, Beaudet and Aboud, 1988), the self-esteem task (Harter, 1988) and the racial identification task (Barrett, 2007)
- 4 stereotypes of white character in each context – Well-behaved. Likes doing things alone. Ignores others, thinks s/he are better than others (Davis, Leman & Smith, 2007)

Session One: Implicit Story Memory task (Nesdale, 1999)

- 4 stereotypical and 4 non-stereotypical trait activities - 2 positive and 2 negative - for each target character enacted by appropriate target character in the story
- Children asked to recall who conducted which activity in story



Session Two: Explicit Attribution Task (Doyle et al., 1988)



16 traits from implicit task
Assign to each target character in turn
Non comparative and Not Forced Choice

Session Two: Individual Esteem The Self-Perception Profile (Harter, 1985)

- Items from the Global Self-worth and social Acceptance Subscales administered in questionnaire format

Session Two: Racial and Ethnic Identification Strength of Identification Task (Barrett, 2007) In-group Identification

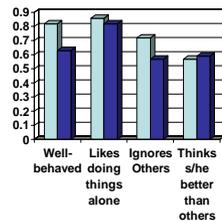
Six Items asking children about their:

- Degree of identification with their racial and ethnic group
- Their happiness and sadness at their racial and ethnic group
- Their feelings about positive & negative evaluations of their racial and ethnic group
- The importance of their racial and ethnic group and
- Their pride in their racial and ethnic group

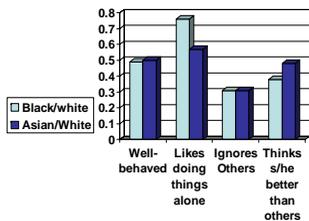
Results

Stereotype Content (Mean Scores)

Implicit Task



Explicit Task

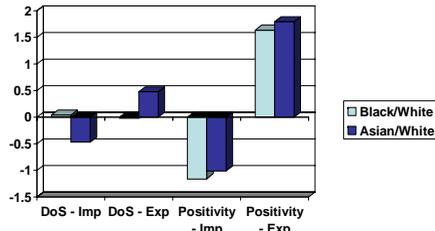


Higher recall for Well-behaved ($p < .01$) and Ignored others ($p < .01$) for white character in the black/white than Asian/white

White children more likely to assign likes doing things with others to white character in the black/white than the Asian/white context ($p < .01$)

Stereotyping: Degree of Stereotyping (DoS) = Number of stereotypical traits recalled/assigned to each character minus the number of non-stereotypical traits recalled/assigned for that same character

Attitude: Positivity = Number of positive traits recalled/assigned to each character minus number of negative traits recalled/assigned for that same character
White Children's DoS and Positivity for the white character in the black/white and Asian/white context



- Degree of Stereotyping Unchanged with Comparative Context on both Implicit and Explicit tasks
- Positivity for white Character unchanged with context on the implicit and explicit tasks

	Black/white Context	Asian/white Context
Strength of Identification with Race (white)	4.04 (.66)	3.63 (.87)
Strength of Identification with Ethnic Group (English)	3.87 (.64)	3.95 (.86)

- White children's identification with their racial group was higher in the black/white than the Asian/white context ($p > .05$)

Conclusions

- Content of white children's in-group stereotyping changed with comparative context
- Comparative context affective the content of stereotyping in different ways on implicit and explicit tasks
- In-group character positivity, self-esteem, the degree of in-group character stereotyping and racial and ethnic self-identification remained unchanged with comparative context

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