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Teachers' and preservice teachers' stereotypes, attitudes, and spontaneous judgments of male ethnic minority students

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ABSTRACT

The current research investigated German preservice and experienced teachers' implicit stereotypes, attitudes, and explicit cognitions with respect to male ethnic minority students. Using the Implicit Association Test, Study 1 revealed negative implicit stereotypes as preservice and experienced teachers more strongly associated ethnic minority students with negative learning and working behaviors than ethnic majority students. Study 2 showed negative implicit attitudes toward ethnic minority students. Explicit cognitions in both studies were positive. In addition to characterizing teachers' attitudes, Study 2 explored the role of attitudes in spontaneous judgments. Participants with more negative implicit attitudes made less favorable judgments of ethnic minority students. Results are discussed in terms of their implications for ethnic minority students and classroom interactions as well as for teacher education programs.

1. Introduction

The currentresearch was concerned with the nature of preservice and experienced teachers' implicit stereotypes (Study 1) and implicit attitudes toward ethnic minority students (Study 2).[1] Because the literature has indicated that attitudes affect behavior, and implicit attitudes contribute to spontaneous and more automatic behavior (Olson & Fazio, 2009), in Study 2, in order to simulate spontaneous behavior, we additionally examined preference ratings that teachers of ethnic minority students made under time constraints, and we investigated the contribution of attitudes toward predicting these ratings.

In Germany, ethnic minority students are disadvantaged in school. They are overrepresented in the lower school tracks (Baumert & Schümer et al., 2002; Caro, Lenkeit, Lehmann, & Schwippert, 2009), drop out of school at higher rates, and leave school more frequently with low or no qualifications (Coneus, Gernandt, & Saam, 2009). These disadvantages are not restricted to Germany. In educational systems that employ either within- or between-school tracking, ethnic minority students are consistently underrepresented in the academic and higher-level school tracks (Darity, Castellino, Tyson, Cobb, & McMillen, 2001; Klapproth & Schaltz, 2014; Lewis & Cheng, 2006; Oakes, 2005; Southworth & Mickelson, 2007; Van Houtte, Demanet, & Stevens, 2012). Although ethnic minority students often perform worse in school than their majority peers (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Stanat, Rauch, & Segeritz, 2010), the disadvantages remain even when academic achievement is controlled for (Bonefeld, Dickhäuser, Janke, Praetorius, & Dresel, 2017; Dauber, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1996; Oakes, 1986). Limited learning opportunities and more negative classroom climates promote these disadvantages further (Oakes, 1986). Teachers give grades, create learning opportunities, and are involved in decisions about school tracks (Ansalone & Biafora, 2004). Consequently, whether teachers contribute to the disadvantages that ethnic minority students experience is a question that should be addressed.

Teachers' expectations have been discussed to play a pivotal role in judgments about students (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Expectations of the members of a social group can result from stereotypes (Stangor & McMillan, 1992). Stereotypes often are related to prejudice (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), which is defined as negative attitudes toward a social group (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, & Gaertner, 1996). Hence investigating stereotypes as well as attitudes is crucial. This is of particular importance when it comes to male students. Not only have male students been found to be more prone to stereotypical biases (Maniadaki, Sonuga-Barke, & Kakouros, 2003; Parks & Kennedy, 2007), but teachers have been found to perceive them as more disruptive

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[1] This research was conducted in Germany. In this context, we rely on a common US definition, which specifies that ethnic minorities are people who are grouped by their race or their cultural origin (Phinney, 1996). As such, this term includes both, race as well as culture. In Germany, ethnic minorities are often defined as people who were born abroad themselves or who have parents who were born abroad.

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(Arbuckle & Little, 2004; Bertrand & Pan, 2013) and to punish them more harshly for misbehavior (Arbuckle & Little, 2004), even when the degree of misbehavior was controlled for (Glock, 2016). Such differences were also found in perceptions of academic achievement, as teachers have generally been found to hold lower expectations of male students (Timmermans, de Boer, & van der Werf, 2016) and have consequently evaluated them as scoring lower in language proficiency than female students (Krkovica, Greiff, Kupiainen, Vainikainen, & Hautamäki, 2014; Ready & Wright, 2011). Such different perceptions and judgments might be even more extreme for male ethnic minority students (Author et al., 2016b; Roderick, 2003), who thereby constitute a student group that is especially vulnerable to teachers' biases (Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, & Zamel, 2009).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Stereotypes

Stereotypes consist of the perceived attributes the members of a group share and can be considered socially shared knowledge (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). They are assumed to have different sources. They develop through the direct experience with the members of a particular social group (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Beach, 2001), through other persons and media reports which often mirror the views prevalent in society (Sherman, 1996). Stereotypes are activated when a member of a social group is encountered, and conscious control is required to inhibit the influence of stereotypes on subsequent information processing (Devine, 1989; Monteith, Sherman, & Devine, 1998). Stereotypes are assumed to work on an implicit and explicit level (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Implicit stereotypes are defined as "the introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate attributions of qualities to members of a social category" (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 15). In this sense, implicit stereotypes are the result of explicit stereotypes that might have been consciously changed or rejected (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). However, according to the assumptions of the associative-propositional evaluation (APE) model, implicit stereotypes might also affect explicit stereotypes because implicit associations are assumed to be "translated" into explicit cognitions (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). Hence, a reciprocal relationship is plausible given that regulating processes such as social desirability concerns might result in controlling implicit influences on explicit cognitions. Implicit stereotypes work automatically (Bargh, 1999) and influence perception regardless of people's motivation to control prejudice (Devine, 1989). Explicit stereotypes might differ from implicit stereotypes not only because they have changed (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995) but also because of social norms (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995) and social desirability concerns (De Houwer, 2006), which is particularly true for socially sensitive issues (Dovidio, Kawakami, Smoak, & Gaertner, 2009).

2.2. Attitudes

This differentiation between implicit and explicit levels also holds for attitudes defined as object-evaluation associations. Implicit attitudes are automatic evaluations that come to mind whenever the attitude object is present, whereas explicit attitudes are assumed to be the result of deliberative processes (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). The MODE model (Olson & Fazio, 2009), specifies how attitudes might affect behavior. Implicit attitudes should be most dominant in situations in which cognitive resources are limited and when people have no motivation to engage in effortful thinking (Olson & Fazio, 2009). By contrast, when cognitive resources are plentiful and people are willing to engage in deliberation, explicit attitudes should be the primary guides of behavior (Olson & Fazio, 2009). These borders become fuzzier when situations entail automatic and controlled components (Olson & Fazio, 2009), and subsequently, implicit as well as explicit attitudes might affect behavior and judgments. This implicit and explicit difference also exists on a measurement level. In recent years, several implicit methods have been developed to counter social desirability and social norm effects in measurement. One prominent method is the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). This method can be used to investigate implicit stereotypes as well as implicit attitudes and is based on the assumption that people can more easily categorize concepts as belonging together when the concepts share strong associations as opposed to when no or only weak associations exist (Greenwald et al., 1998).

2.3. The interplay between stereotypes and attitudes

Taken together, stereotypes entail socially shared knowledge about the attributes people associate with the members of a particular social group—the thoughts—and attitudes are the positive or negative evaluations of this group—the feelings (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Stereotypes and attitudes differ, as stereotypes do not entail valences but only attributes, while attitudes always connect a social group to valence (Greenwald et al., 2002). They do interplay because the presence of a person might activate both the stereotype and the attitude (Bessenoff & Sherman, 2000; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). Attitudes and stereotypes are positively related when the evaluative meaning of stereotypes are correlated with attitudes (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Fishbein, 2008). That is, if stereotypes entail attributes which are evaluated as predominantly negative, then the attitude should reflect this negativity.

However, in the school context, implicit attitudes and stereotypes seem to be particularly relevant. Working as a teacher is stressful (van Dick & Wagner, 2001), requiring teachers to manage multiple tasks simultaneously (Santavirta, Solovieva, & Theorell, 2007) and to respond immediately to situational demands (Doyle, 2006). These circumstances often leave teachers with no opportunity to engage deeply in controlled and thoughtful processes, thus paving the way for the influence of implicit attitudes and stereotypes. Teachers are the main decision makers in school and they make judgments about grading (Brookhart, 1994), ability grouping (Haller, 1985), and grade retention (Bonvin, 2003). Considering the influence of such judgments on students' educational careers, teachers' biases in judgments can contribute to the disadvantages ethnic minority students experience in school.

Despite this implicit influence, explicit attitudes also seem to contribute to judgments. Implicit and explicit attitudes do not necessarily correlate with each other (see Hofmann, Gawronski, Gschwendner, Le, & Schmitt, 2005, for meta-analysis). This is particularly true in socially sensitive domains such as racial or ethnic attitudes, where individuals might be reluctant to express their "real" attitudes; rather, people report social norms (Fazio et al., 1995) or socially desirable answers (De Houwer, 2006).

In the school context, explicit attitudes toward teaching ethnic minority students should also be taken into account. In our studies, we consider four dimensions as relevant for explicit attitudes toward teaching ethnic minority students, which are values, beliefs, and motivational orientations (Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, & Kunter, 2015). Values are constituted by teachers' expectations and stereotypes (Hachfeld et al., 2015), while beliefs refer to cultural sensitivity (Bakari, 2003) and multicultural beliefs (Hachfeld et al., 2015). Such beliefs entail knowledge about ethnic minority students' needs (Bakari, 2003) and emphasizing the cultural diversity in class as enriching for instruction and education (Hachfeld et al., 2011). On the motivational side, the enthusiasm to teach ethnic minority students as well as self-efficacy beliefs are crucial (Hachfeld et al., 2015).

3. Study 1

Study 1 focused on teachers' and preservice teachers' implicit stereotypes about ethnic minority students and explicit attitudes toward

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