Infrahumanization and affective prejudice as drivers of teacher discrimination against Roma students

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Introduction

- Roma people represent the most stigmatized ethnic minority group in Europe.
- Stereotypes and prejudice are grounds for recommending ethnic minority students to lower-track schools (Glock et al., 2015).
- Infrahumanization is a subtle form of dehumanization (i.e., attributing more secondary emotions to the ingroup than to outgroups) and is associated with discrimination and support for violence against the outgroup.
- Infrahumanization could be a psychological driver of teachers’ discrimination: Students who are perceived as less human, may be considered less skilled, and thus not able to perform academically.
- Blatant dehumanization predicted teachers’ school recommendations for Roma students in Hungary (Bruneau et al., 2020), but infrahumanization could predict teacher discrimination in contexts where expressing blatant attitudes is not normative.

Hypotheses

- H1: Participants judge more appropriate the placement of self-identified Roma students into lower educational tracks than self-identified Turkish and German students, regardless of the grand mean of the grades.
- H2: Infrahumanization will be positively associated with lower track education recommendations for Roma students, beyond affective prejudice.

Methods

School track recommendation: 22 Student profiles with six grades across six undefined school subjects (6 self-identified Roma, 6 self-identified Turks, 10 self-identified Germans)

How appropriate on a scale from 0 (not at all appropriate) to 10 (very appropriate) are these three different school tracks (Gymnasium, Real-, or Hauptschule) for this student?

We calculated a discrimination score, by averaging the tendency to recommend Roma over German students to the lower school track with the tendency to recommend German over Roma students to the higher school track (Bruneau et al., 2020).

Infrahumanization (Kteily et al., 2015)

How typical are six primary emotions and six secondary emotions for the target (Roma, Turks, Germans) and the distractor groups

Affective prejudice: Feeling thermometers (Haddock et al., 1993)

How warm/cold do you feel towards these groups?

Participants

- Pre-service teachers in the Ruhr Area (N = 202)
- 69% female, 14% self-identified with a migration background

Results

To test H1 a 3 (target groups) x 3 (school tracks) within-subjects ANOVA, showed a significant interaction student profile x school track F(4, 20) = 13.53, p < .001, η² = .72. Paired t tests indicated that pre-service teachers recommended self-identified Roma students (M = 3.71; SD = 1.99) more suitable than Turkish (M = 3.51; SD = 2.16) and German students (M = 3.36; SD = 2.10) to the lowest school track, all ps < .001. Biased school recommendation were found for the high track (i.e., Gymnasium).

To test H2, multiple regression analysis showed that participants’ degree of biased recommendation was significantly predicted by affective prejudice, but not by infrahumanization, after controlling for gender and migration background of participants (Table 2).

Table 1. Teachers’ preference of placing students in low, middle and high school tracks

Table 2. Multiple regression predicting teachers’ discrimination as a function of infrahumanization and prejudice


dependent Outcome: Discrimination scores

- Gender
- Migration background
- Infrahumanization Roma
- Prejudice Roma

Pre-service teachers tended to place self-identified Roma students into lower educational tracks more than self-identified Turkish and German students. Teacher’s discrimination was predicted by affective prejudice against Roma but not by infrahumanization.

Further studies could explore if in-service teachers report similar biased school recommendations for Roma students.

Conclusions and Implications

- Pre-service teachers tended to place self-identified Roma students into lower educational tracks more than self-identified Turkish and German students. Teacher’s discrimination was predicted by affective prejudice against Roma but not by infrahumanization.
- Teacher training should aim at prejudice reduction and discrimination against Roma students.
- Further studies could explore if in-service teachers report similar biased school recommendations for Roma students.

Main references


