BELIEFS OF SOCIAL EQUALITY AND ATTRIBUTION OF TRAITS TO IN-GROUP AND OUT-GROUP PEERS: A STUDY OF ITALIAN CHILDREN

Written by Cristina MOSSO, Emanuela RABAGLIETTI, Giovanni BRIANTE, Silvia CIAIRANO

ABSTRACT

The study investigated firstly, gender and age differences with respect to the beliefs of social equality, a cognitive component of system justification; secondly, the attribution of positive and negative traits to in-group and out-group peers in school age children. Thirdly and finally, we explored the relations between social equality and attribution of traits, controlling for gender and age. 163 Italian children (M age = 8.37 years, SD = 1.11; 49% girls) participated in the study. They were administered a short self-report questionnaire investigating social equality and were asked to attribute positive and negative traits to the figures of two children (one in-group child with "white" skin; one out-group child with "black" skin). We found that: a) older children perceived higher social equality and girls were less likely than boys to attribute negative traits to the in-group peer; b) children who had higher social equality beliefs were less likely to attribute negative traits and more likely to attribute positive traits to both in-group and out-group peers, also controlling for gender and age. Increasing the beliefs of social equality in children appears a useful educational intervention for promoting both in-group and out-group non-discriminatory peer relations.

KEYWORDS: social equality, trait attribution, children.

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