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Theoretical framework

- Sherif & Sherif (1965, p. 156) : "Whenever individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identification, we have an instance of intergroup behavior."
- Tajfel & Turner (1979) : Intra et intergroup behaviour are driven by the acquisition and the maintaining of a positive identity. It exists, in a situation of intergroup comparison, a unique mechanism of discrimination (expressed by the pro-in-group bias) that structures the different group members' relations, whatever/whoever the groups (targets and sources) are.
- Castel & Lacassagne (2005; 2011) : The mechanism of discrimination is not independent from the target on which it is applied. There wouldn't be one psychosocial mechanism that stems from the existence of a situation characterized by the confrontation of two memberships whatever they were (social categorization), but many psychosocial distinct mechanisms leading to different types of discrimination. In fact, the structure of the relation between members belonging to different groups and behaving as such falls into one of three configurations:
 - ✓ The reality as it appears : for example, the discrimination toward the immigrants symbolically enters in the reality of the labour world where natives hold the dominant position/status and immigrants hold the dominated position/status.
 - ✓ Opposite worlds : for example, the discrimination against Blacks, symbolically referring to the extremes of a bipolar dimension (black and white, day and night, light and shadow...), embeds the protagonists (Blacks and Whites) in opposite worlds where the category of the subject is on the positive side and that of the other subject on the negative side.
 - ✓ In reference to one universe : for example, anti-Semitism is in one and only one universe that classifies humans in reference to only one criterion: belonging or not to the Jewish community, the latter thus being a minority.
- Castel & Lacassagne (2011) : Each one of these three relational structure configurations corresponds to the activation of a particular type of social partition leading to a particular discrimination process : respectively, the activation of a statutory partition leads to retrograding the exo-group members, the activation of an oppositive partition leads to stigmatization and the activation of a community partition leads to exclusion.
- Castel & Lacassagne (2005; 2011) : The activation of one or another type of social partition necessarily responds to the need of a positive social identity and is the result of a process of negotiation taking place during the establishing of the contract of communication. While a group member finds his/her equilibrium (i.e. a positive identity) in a certain partition, his interlocutor (a member of another group) find his equilibrium in another partition. This is why the activation of a particular partition among an individual does not systematically appeal the activation of the same partition among the interlocutor.

Topic and Aims

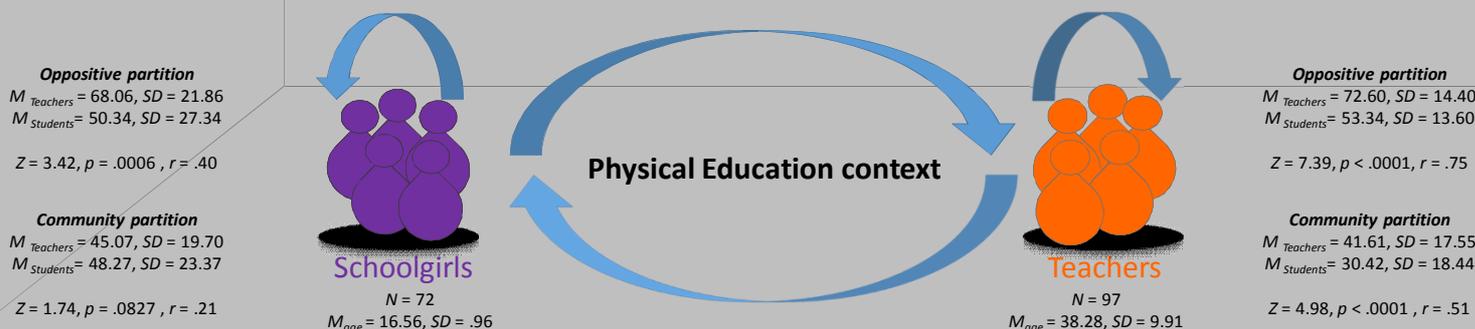
- To illustrate the functioning of the social partition paradigm as a grid of lecture of intergroup relation structure and identity processes, we present a study that examines the relation between physical education teachers and students.
- The literature about this intergroup relation emphasizes the classical effect of a hierarchical disequilibrium putting teacher in the dominant (top) position and the students in the dominated (bottom) position (Ecalte, 1998).
- However, up to now, this evidence seems to be brought up by series of studies that take for granted this statutory social partition between the two groups while this partition type may be activated merely by, and among, teachers or students.
- These studies thus directly examines the relation between the socio-institutional position of teachers and the representations (investigated notably through discourse analyses) that teachers foster about the students, showing that the representations justify the social status positioning (Meyer, 1981) and even put these representations, which are examined from the point of view of the teachers, in relation with the success and failure of the students (see for example, Rosevoal, 1987). Therefore, we have not asked so far this relation structure from the point of view of the students themselves. Do they admit this relation structure configuration? How do the students manage to acquire and maintain a positive identity as a group of students face to the teachers who, according to the literature, seem to interiorize and activate a statutory partition (permitting to maintain a positive social identity)?

Methodology

- Qualitative phase : participants (72 schoolgirls and 97 Physical Education teachers) were asked to list 5 adjectives (traits) that characterizes their own group (in-group) and the other group (outgroup).
- Quantitative phase : participants were asked to
 1. evaluate the value (valence) of all the traits they have listed (on a scale of from 0 [extreme flaw] to 100 [extreme quality]) → to test the eventual activation of an oppositive partition
 2. assess the proportion they estimate members of each group hold the listed traits (from 0 [no one possesses this trait] to 100 [all of them possess this trait]) → to test the eventual activation of a community partition

Results

- Regarding the oppositive partition : teachers have the possibility to insert favourably in this partition (in-group favouritism) and girls student recognize this advantageous positioning (out-group favouritism)
- Regarding community partition : both teachers and student girls consider this positioning favourably (in-group favouritism),



Discussion and Conclusion

- Schoolgirls can enjoy a social identity that is favorable regarding the teachers by investing a community partition.
- This study shows that in fact what is at stake in terms of teachers-students relation is not merely a statutory relational structure, as argued so far in the literature.
- The structure of the teachers-students relation also is articulated around community and values considerations.
- Considering oppositive and community partitions permits to understand better the identity dynamics between the two groups.
- It's thus necessary to explore the three partitions in a situation of intergroup comparison so that one may better understand, in terms of identity processes, the most pertinent positioning of each group (and the individuals composing it), by questioning from the very beguining of an intergroup relation study the asymmetric intergroup positioning.