

Stressing similarities or ignoring differences? Shedding light into different forms of color-evasive ideology with pre- and in-service teachers

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Abstract The color-evasive ideology (commonly termed “colorblindness”) proposes that ethnic and cultural group memberships should be deemphasized. Yet there is a conceptual confusion around the meaning and measurement of color-evasiveness, and this construct is not used consistently in the international as well as German literature. Our purpose is to investigate whether two underlying forms of the color-evasive ideology (i.e., *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*) are two distinct, albeit related, constructs. We tested this hypothesis by applying these two forms of the color-evasive ideology to teachers’ cultural diversity beliefs. In two cross-sectional field studies conducted with pre-service teachers (Study 1, $n=210$), and in-service teachers (Study 2, $n=99$), questionnaire items on the *stressing similarities* ideology and items on the *ignoring differences* ideology loaded on two separate factors, providing a better fit to the data than the one-factor model. Mean scores on these two types of color-evasive ideology also differed substantially, indicating that participants across the two studies mainly endorsed the *stressing similarities* perspective. The *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* ideologies related differently to other intergroup ideologies (i.e., multiculturalism and polyculturalism), and showed different patterns to psychosocial functioning in culturally diverse classrooms (i.e., cultural diversity-related stress).

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Ähnlichkeiten hervorheben oder Unterschiede ignorieren? Unterschiedliche Formen der Color-Evasion-Ideologie bei Lehramtsstudierenden und Lehrkräften

Zusammenfassung Nach der sogenannten „Color-Evasion“ Ideologie (auch als „Color-blindness“ oder Farbenblindheit bezeichnet) sind ethnische und kulturelle Gruppenzugehörigkeiten irrelevant. Es gibt jedoch begriffliche Unklarheiten über die Bedeutung und Messung von Color-evasion, und dieses Konstrukt wird in der internationalen so wie in der deutschen Literatur nicht konsistent verwendet. Unser Ziel ist es, zu untersuchen, ob zwei zugrunde liegende Formen der Color-evasion-Ideologie, nämlich *Ähnlichkeiten hervorheben* und *Unterschiede ignorieren*, zwei unterschiedliche, wenn auch verwandte Konstrukte sind. Wir testeten diese Hypothese, indem wir prüften, ob sich diese Unterscheidung der beiden Formen der Color-evasion-Ideologie in den Überzeugungen über kulturelle Vielfalt von (angehenden) Lehrer*innen widerspiegelte. In zwei Querschnitts-Feldstudien, die mit Lehramtsstudierenden (Studie 1, $n=210$) und Lehrkräften (Studie 2, $n=99$) durchgeführt wurden, luden Items zum Hervorheben von Ähnlichkeiten und zum Ignorieren von Unterschieden auf zwei getrennten Faktoren, welche eine bessere Passung mit den Daten als das Ein-Faktor-Modell zeigten. Die Durchschnittswerte für diese beiden Arten der Color-evasion-Ideologie unterschieden sich ebenfalls erheblich, was zeigt, dass die Teilnehmer an den beiden Studien hauptsächlich *Ähnlichkeiten hervorheben*. Auch in ihrem Zusammenhang mit anderen Diversity-Ideologien (Multikulturalismus und Polykulturalismus), und mit der psychosozialen Adaptation von Lehrer*innen (Stress im Zusammenhang mit kultureller Vielfalt) unterschieden sich *Ähnlichkeiten hervorheben* und *Unterschiede ignorieren*, was die unterschiedliche konzeptuelle Bedeutung der beiden Formen von Color-evasion ebenfalls unterstreicht.

Schlüsselwörter Intergruppenwahrnehmung · Kulturelle Überzeugungen von Lehrkräften · Color-blindness bzw · Color-evasion Ideologie · Kulturelle Vielfalt

1 Introduction

Acknowledging and supporting cultural and ethnic group differences, or de-emphasizing group memberships by focusing on human qualities that everyone shares are common examples of intergroup or diversity ideologies (Plaut et al. 2018). Intergroup ideologies vary in prescriptive beliefs about how much attention should be paid to intergroup differences (Hahn et al. 2015), often dividing individuals' views and ideas regarding what approach should be promoted and spread the most. Intergroup ideologies permeate the political, societal, and educational fronts of many globalized societies, including Germany. As schools are influenced by the larger

cultural and social milieu in which they are nested (Eccles and Roeser 2009), intergroup ideologies may be reflected through a variety of school practices, including, for example, curricula, mission statements, school rules, teaching strategies, and approaches to linguistic diversity (Celeste et al. 2019; Civitillo et al. 2017; Gogolin 2014; Pulinx et al. 2017).

Most of the intergroup ideologies literature applied to the school context focuses on the divide between multiculturalism and color-evasiveness¹ (Thijs and Verkuyten 2014), two fundamentally different and conflicting ideologies. Yet within these ideologies, the operationalization and measurement may vary. Notably, variations within the same ideologies might be linked to the context (i.e., countries with different migration histories and ethnic relations) in which they are examined (see Verkuyten and Yogeeswaran 2020 for a current discussion on multiculturalism). Color-evasiveness is also a multifaceted ideology with different meanings across intergroup contexts (Neville et al. 2000). Compared to multiculturalism, implementation of color-evasive ideology in the school context is associated with negative outcomes for ethnic minority students (Phalet and Baysu 2020). However, findings of research on color-evasiveness conducted outside the United States are inconclusive, leading to conflicting evidence. These inconsistencies around color-evasiveness, presumably depending on the different meanings and measurements that studies have attached to this ideology and the context in which it is studied, warrant further investigation.

In this study, we look closely at the distinction between two forms of color-evasive ideology—*stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*. In short, the *stressing similarities* ideology emphasizes common ground among groups of individuals, whereas the *ignoring differences* ideology directs attention to the person, and not the social groups the person belongs to (Whitley and Webster 2019). Yet, both ideologies result in practices de-emphasizing differences (Rosenthal and Levy 2010), which underlines their “color-evasion” characteristics. In two cross-sectional field studies, we seek to offer conceptual clarity and empirical evidence of how two distinct, albeit theoretically related, forms of color-evasive ideology are reflected in two samples of teachers in Germany.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Intergroup ideologies and teacher beliefs about cultural diversity

An “ideology” provides the frameworks through which individuals represent and interpret social reality (Lewis 2001). As such, intergroup ideologies shape how different cultural groups relate to each other and to the school (Phalet and Baysu 2020). Empirical research suggests that teachers anchor different intergroup ideologies to their beliefs about cultural diversity in education (Civitillo et al. 2019; Hachfeld et al. 2015). Beliefs are seen as individual cognitive conceptions in constant relation

¹ The original term *color-blindness* is not used in this manuscript to avoid any negative connotation regarding individual differences in visual capabilities and as we believe ideologies are to some extent a conscious choice.

to behavior and the external environment (Bandura 1997). Teachers' beliefs act as a filter to knowledge, influence the framing of a problem or a task, and guide the teacher's intention and action in the classroom (Fives and Buehl 2012). Beliefs that teachers hold about cultural diversity are multi-layered and domain specific (Civitillo et al. 2018). One set of beliefs concerns the teaching of students from cultural minority backgrounds. This domain of beliefs may be linked to views on cultural expectations and prejudice (Makarova and Herzog 2013; Van Praag et al. 2016), possibly influencing the way teachers interact and support their students. On a personal level, too, this domain of beliefs may be associated with teachers' perceptions of challenges and educational demands when dealing with culturally diverse students (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003). Thus, it is imperative to understand what beliefs teachers hold towards diverse groups of students.

Teachers may strongly adhere to or reject a certain intergroup ideology, or embrace elements of different approaches. As such, some teachers may explicitly acknowledge students' cultural differences, but they may avoid discussions about diversity issues because they feel unprepared or believe it is inappropriate to do so in the school context (Castagno 2008). Yet previous studies have shown very different outcomes when teachers are high in one ideology. For example, in a sample of 239 U.S. pre-service teachers, a strong endorsement of color-evasiveness was associated with lower levels of cultural diversity awareness (Wang et al. 2014). In contrast, when teachers' beliefs are more in line with multiculturalism than with color-evasiveness, their instructional behaviors tend to adapt more to different students' needs and experiences (Civitillo et al. 2019). Although comparing different ideologies remains important, few studies (Byrd 2015; Pedersen et al. 2015) have quantitatively explored multiple forms of color-evasive ideology.

Research on teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity in education often relies solely on pre-service teachers, or, to a lesser extent, investigating only in-service teachers (Gay 2015). Pre-service teachers may be more open to dealing with diversity, especially at the end of the initial teaching preparation or when they enter the profession (Kaldi et al. 2018; Kumar and Lauerma 2018). But this readiness to embrace diversity may erode as soon as they start teaching due to contextual school characteristics, such as being required to meet stringent learning goals and testing regimes (Agirdag et al. 2016). And yet, Glock et al. (2019) found that in-service teachers held more positive explicit and implicit attitudes towards ethnic minority students than pre-service teachers, perhaps due to in-service teachers' positive actual experiences of working in increasingly diverse schools. Our research takes these differences into consideration. We therefore explore the extent to which pre-service, as well as more experienced in-service teachers, endorse beliefs reflecting multiple forms of color-evasiveness.

3 Theoretical foundation of color-evasive ideology

The over-arching argument of the color-evasive ideology proposes that group membership characteristics such as culture, ethnicity, and race do not matter (Neville et al. 2000). Color-evasiveness is a neutral ideology (that is, it does not *per se* reflect

hostility or negative thoughts towards minorities), but in contrast to other intergroup ideologies, such as multiculturalism and polyculturalism, it aims at devaluing and minimizing cultural differences. In fact, unlike color-evasiveness, multiculturalism refers to the acknowledgment, and support for, culturally diverse groups (van de Vijver et al. 2008), whereas polyculturalism highlights the interconnectedness and dynamic relations among cultures to move away from an essentialist view of culture (Morris et al. 2015; Rosenthal and Levy 2010). In contrast to multiculturalism, the polyculturalism ideology rejects a stable, categorical view of culture to emphasize continual intercultural contact through colonization, migration, and globalization (Morris et al. 2015). Historians have argued that cultural groups have always interacted and mutually influenced one another (Prashad 2003). Thus, from a polycultural view, cultures are not “pure”, homogenous, and static entities that shape individuals, rather, all individuals and groups are continuously engaged with and influenced by a multitude of cultures. Although multiculturalism and polyculturalism are not immune to critics (Civitillo et al. 2017; Rosenthal and Levy 2010), the color-evasive ideology has been particularly criticized for ignoring and reducing awareness of existing societal inequalities, perceived discrimination, and racism (Bonilla-Silva 2015).

Also, for teachers, endorsing color-evasiveness is seen as an “uncritical habit of mind” (Ladson-Billings 1994, p. 32) because it fails to acknowledge that students bring different cultural group-based experiences into the school context. However, research on color-evasive ideology across different outcomes has shown mixed results. For instance, a recent meta-analysis of 59 studies on diversity ideologies and their intergroup consequences (Whitley and Webster 2019) found the relation of color-evasiveness with prejudice to vary. The authors concluded that this variation might be linked to the different operationalizations in the questionnaire items used to measure color-evasiveness. Emphasis on common intergroup identity—the *stressing similarities ideology*—could lower tendencies to focus on group differences and, in turn, counteracting perceptions of out-group homogeneity (Rosenthal and Levy 2010). Completely downplaying any between-group variations—the *ignoring differences ideology*—instead could lead to overseeing existing differences, and failing to acknowledge group stereotypes. These issues around the forms of color-evasiveness should be clarified to better understand the educational implications for teachers of *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*.

3.1 The stressing similarities ideology

The *stressing similarities* ideology acknowledges cultural differences but emphasizes common ground, what is shared between individuals (“We are all humans”) and the necessity of treating everyone equally (Rosenthal and Levy 2010). School climate research has shown consistently that the *stressing similarities* ideology remains the dominant approach reflected in the school curriculum, particularly in Germany (Civitillo 2017; Schachner 2019; Schwarzenhal et al. 2020). The emphasis on *stressing similarities* may be linked to the unique socio-historical context of Germany. In attempting to distance itself from the brutal Nazi ideology that divided, sorted, and ranked people by ethnic and racial groups, Germany has deliberately stressed the

importance of similarities and de-emphasized ethnic and cultural differences among groups. Subsequently, color-evasiveness is mostly measured through scales focusing on the *stressing similarities* ideology. Results around this particular form of color-evasiveness are inconclusive. For example, Schwarzenhal et al. (2020) found that students' perceptions of deconstructing group membership through the *stressing similarities* ideology was positively associated with intercultural competence for students with and without an immigrant background. Conversely, for teachers, endorsing beliefs of *stressing similarities* is seen as problematic and has been linked to lower self-reported teaching adaptability to diverse students' needs (Hachfeld et al. 2015).

Hachfeld et al. (2011) introduced and validated a scale with a sample of predominantly ethnic German pre-service teachers, measuring egalitarianism and multiculturalism beliefs. Although there might be ideological limitations to this scale considering the underlying, simplifying assumptions concerning culture, which are inherent to the intergroup ideologies (Costa 2020), this measure is the first valid instrument to measure intergroup ideologies with in-service and pre-service teachers. Items of the subscale measuring egalitarianism are theoretically in line with the *stressing similarities* ideology (e.g., "Schools should aim to foster and support the similarities between students from different cultural backgrounds", or "In the classroom, it is important that students of different origins recognize the similarities that exist between them"). In the present study, we thus assessed the *stressing similarities* ideology using this well-established scale in the German context.

3.2 The ignoring differences ideology

The *ignoring differences* ideology, in which students are taught they should not pay attention to race, ethnicity, religion, and culture but rather focus on each individual, emerged as prominent in U.S. school literature (Ladson-Billings 1994). North American studies showed that color-evasiveness is dominant in the school context, among both pre- and in-service teachers (Cadenas et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Walker 2011; Wang et al. 2014). This approach is common in some European countries as well. In Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, related forms of the *ignoring differences* ideology have emerged and remain dominant in the school context among majority group members, including teachers and school principals (Celeste et al. 2019; Rissanen 2019; Roebroek and Guimond 2015; Weiner 2016). In a sample of secondary schools in Belgium, school policies devaluing relevant identity aspects of ethnic minority students were related to students' lower grades and low sense of school belonging (Celeste et al. 2019). Among Finnish and Swedish school principals, Rissanen (2019) found that the *ignoring differences* ideology was the most prominent ideological belief when dealing with religious diversity. School principals ostensibly argued "the fact that the students or their families are Muslims was totally insignificant" (Rissanen 2019, p. 9), ignoring an important cultural identity marker as religion. Yet it is less clear whether the *ignoring differences* ideology is reflected in teachers' beliefs also in Germany.

Research on teachers' beliefs has suggested that the *ignoring differences* ideology may be chosen to appear unprejudiced when dealing with students (Schofield

2010; Walker 2011). However, denying diversity and its related challenges may lead to high frustration because they will keep existing, even if teachers try to ignore them. This is because the explicit and implicit devaluation of groups reaffirms the uneven distribution of resources, rights and privileges among the student population (Gomolla and Radtke 2009). Additionally, it has been found that teachers' cultural diversity beliefs in line with the *ignoring differences* ideology may be associated with higher levels of cultural diversity-related stress (Gutentag et al. 2018; Tatar et al. 2011). Notably, reporting a high level of cultural diversity-related stress is associated with high rates of leaving the teaching profession (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003). Thus, embracing the *ignoring differences* ideology may not only be problematic for ethnic minority students, but it could potentially harm teachers' psychosocial functioning in the long run.

Byrd (2015) measured perceptions of school cultural diversity climate with young adolescents in the United States including a subscale consisting of four items, all with an emphasis on the *ignoring differences* ideology (i.e., "Your teacher told you that race doesn't matter"). To adapt the scale to fit the German context, we adapted Byrd's scale. More specifically, we replaced the term "race" with "cultural background" in our study. The construct "race" is bound to the socio-historical context and is used in countries such as the United States (Umaña-Taylor et al. 2014). In contrast, after the post-World War II era, using the term "race" in the European context is both legally problematic and societally difficult, as many people and institutions do not openly recognize racial categories (Simon 2017). While substituting "cultural background" for "race" is an attempt to adapt to European context terminology, it means that the German measure may not capture important race-related aspects of systematic inequities, such as skin color. Although in everyday language, "cultural background" is often racialized and used to refer to visible minorities of color, particularly those of Turkish, Arab, or African descent (Elrick and Schwartzman 2015), the items do not explicitly capture this. In addition, as our survey was administered to teachers and not to students, a slightly different wording was used in line with Hachfeld and colleagues' scale (e.g., "It is important to ignore differences between students from different cultural backgrounds"; or "In the classroom, talking about cultural differences is divisive").

4 Cultural diversity in the German context

Germany serves as home to the largest number of immigrants in Europe (OECD 2019). In the last decade, the country has experienced the largest refugee influx since the end of World War II (UNHCR 2019), as well as high migratory flows from Southern and Eastern Europe (Eurostat 2019). In many urban areas such as Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Stuttgart and the Ruhr Area, schools have between 50 and 90% of students with an immigrant background (Schneider 2018). At the same time, ethnic minority teachers are underrepresented in initial teaching preparations and among in-service teachers. In fact, only 7% of the primary and secondary school teaching staff in Germany are of immigrant background (Statistisches Bundesamt 2016). Thus, the education workforce is far less culturally diverse than the students they teach. Given

that color-evasiveness is a preferred ideology among majority group members (Risänen 2019; Weiner 2016), which may be associated with less optimal outcomes among cultural minorities (Celeste et al. 2019), it is even more important to understand how different forms of color-evasive ideology are reflected in teachers' beliefs.

5 The present study

For participants of Study 1 (pre-service teachers) and Study 2 (in-service teachers), the main hypothesis tested is that two forms of color-evasive ideology (i.e., *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*) applied to teachers' cultural diversity beliefs in education are two distinct, albeit related, constructs. We tested this empirically in three different ways. First, in line with previous studies on intergroup ideologies (Hachfeld et al. 2011; Hahn et al. 2015), we assessed whether questionnaire items of *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* beliefs loaded on two separate factors, or whether these two forms of color-evasiveness collapsed into one construct.

Second, variations in means and correlations with other intergroup ideologies (i.e., multiculturalism and polyculturalism) would also indicate whether the *stressing similarities* ideology could go hand in hand with *ignoring differences* beliefs (Hachfeld et al. 2011; Whitley and Webster 2019). Across the two studies, we expected that participants would report similar means for both *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* ideologies, and that both would be negatively correlated to multiculturalism and polyculturalism because at their core level, these two forms of color-evasiveness are incongruent with these ideologies (Rosenthal and Levy 2010).

Third, to shed further light on the relation between *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* ideologies, we investigate how the endorsement of these forms of color-evasiveness could predict personal psychological functioning at school. In Study 2, based on previous studies (Gutentag et al. 2018; Tatar et al. 2011), we expected that both *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* beliefs would predict higher levels of cultural diversity-related stress while accounting for the endorsement of the other ideologies (i.e., multiculturalism and polyculturalism).

6 Methods

6.1 Study 1

6.1.1 Participants and procedure

Participants were recruited as part of the InTePP-project (Inclusive Teaching Professionalization Panel) at the University of Potsdam in which pre-service teachers' competencies and beliefs were assessed. The sample included 210 pre-service teachers in their first semester, with no or little teaching experience. Five participants did not fill in the demographics and the items regarding cultural diversity beliefs, and thus were excluded from later analyses. Of the remaining 205 respondents ($M_{age}=23.7$, $SD=5.4$; 88% females), less than 5% had an immigrant background

(operationalized here as having at least one parent born outside Germany). Almost all participants were born in Germany ($n = 198$; 97%). Participants filled out the questionnaire online as part of a class activity and received no credit. Missing values on the main variables were less than one percent. Data were collected in January through February 2017.

6.1.2 Measures

To measure *stressing similarities* beliefs, we selected the subscale *egalitarianism* (Hachfeld et al. 2011) which consists of four items. To measure *ignoring differences* beliefs, a scale partially adapted and self-devised was used (Byrd 2015), also consisting of four items. For assessing multiculturalism, we used a pre-existing scale (five items; e.g. “It is important for children to learn that people from other cultures can have different values.”; Hachfeld et al. 2011). For polyculturalism, we partially adapted four items from Schachner et al. (in press) (e.g., “In the classroom, it is important to talk about how there are many connections between different cultures.”). Responses are given on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Items for the four intergroup ideologies were randomized. All scales were administered in German. All 17 items of the four intergroup ideologies are reported in the Appendix.

6.1.3 Plan of data analysis

To assess whether the *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* ideologies items loaded on two different but correlated factors, a CFA including latent factors was fitted by using *R*(4.0.0), and the *lavaan* package (Rosseel 2012; version 0.6-3). Multiple indices were used to test overall model fit, with the following indicating acceptable fit: comparative fit index (CFI) ≥ 0.90 , Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) ≥ 0.90 , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) ≤ 0.08 , and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) ≤ 0.08 , and CFI and TLI ≥ 0.95 and RMSEA and SRMR ≤ 0.06 were considered good fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Marsh et al. 2004). The Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimator was selected accounting for complete and incomplete data. We then calculated paired *t* tests and correlations of aggregated mean scores for *stressing similarities*, *ignoring differences*, multiculturalism, and polyculturalism.

6.1.4 Results

The initial one-factor model that included a single factor for both *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* items fitted the data poorly. The two-factor model fitted the data significantly better than the one-factor model. However, modification indices suggested that one item included in the *ignoring differences* factor was problematic (e.g., “It is important to consider that cultural background is irrelevant for how students are treated.”). The German adaption of this item resulted in a complex sentence structure and may have been unclear for participants and resulted in the item not fitting well with the other items. The decision to drop this item im-

Table 1 Model Fit Statistics from Study 1 and Study 2

	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI	
							Lower	Upper
<i>Study 1—Pre-service teachers</i>								
One Factor	175.884	20	0.517	0.324	0.139	0.195	0.170	0.221
Two Factor	64.507	19	0.859	0.792	0.097	0.108	0.080	0.137
Two Factor ^a	14.328	8	0.975	0.953	0.040	0.062	0.000	0.114
<i>Study 2—In-service teachers</i>								
One Factor	79.089	20	0.451	0.232	0.140	0.174	0.136	0.213
Two Factor	33.751	19	0.863	0.798	0.080	0.089	0.031	0.140
Two Factor ^a	16.643	13	0.957	0.931	0.063	0.053	0.000	0.119

Study 1, $n = 205$, Study 2, $n = 98$

^aOne item in the *ignoring differences* factor was dropped. Residual item correlations were not included in any of the models. MLR was used as estimator

proved the fit of the model. The final two-factor model with seven items fitted well, reporting a small negative latent correlation between factors ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.001$). These results demonstrate that for this sample of pre-service teachers, the *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* forms of color-evasive ideology were separate constructs, but not opposing. This means participants can embrace one of the two forms, but some can embrace both, even though this may be less likely. Table 1 (first three rows) includes fit indices comparing the factor solutions.

In the second step, we tested for mean differences between the *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* beliefs. On average, pre-service teachers hold cultural diversity beliefs more in line with the *stressing similarities* ideology ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 0.65$) than with the *ignoring differences* one ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.19$), $M_{Diff} = 2.56$ [2.36, 2.76], $t(204) = 24.94$, $p < 0.001$. In contrast to our expectations, *ignoring differ-*

Table 2 Reliabilities, Descriptives, and Bivariate Correlations of the Main Variables from Study 1 and Study 2

	ω	M	SD	2	3	4	5
<i>Study 1—Pre-service teachers</i>							
1. Stressing Similarities	0.78	5.29	0.65	-0.20*	0.74***	0.75***	-
2. Ignoring Differences	0.76	2.73	1.19	-	-0.25***	-0.17*	-
3. Multiculturalism	0.76	5.20	0.60	-	-	0.74*	-
4. Polyculturalism	0.81	4.94	0.68	-	-	-	-
<i>Study 2—In-service teachers</i>							
1. Stressing Similarities	0.68	5.50	0.55	-0.02	0.54***	0.66***	-0.16**
2. Ignoring Differences	0.69	2.16	1.18	-	-0.19	-0.07	0.32**
3. Multiculturalism	0.69	5.38	0.61	-	-	0.72***	-0.29**
4. Polyculturalism	0.67	4.95	0.72	-	-	-	-0.19*
5. Cultural Diversity-Related Stress	0.79	2.34	0.77	-	-	-	-

Study 1 ($N = 205$). Study 2 ($N = 98$). Scale ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) for the intergroup ideologies. Scale range from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*) for cultural diversity-related stress

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

ences beliefs were negatively correlated with multiculturalism and polyculturalism, whereas *stressing similarities* beliefs were strongly positively correlated with multiculturalism and polyculturalism. Table 2 shows the reliabilities, descriptive findings and bivariate correlations for the main variables from Study 1.

6.2 Study 2

6.2.1 Methods

The reasons to carry out Study 2 were the following: first, to check whether the results are robust or generalize with another sample of teachers who already entered the profession; second, to extend the results and check whether the two types of color-evasiveness beliefs could predict personal psychological functioning at school (i.e., cultural-diversity related stress), controlling for other intergroup ideologies.

6.2.2 Participants and procedure

For Study 2, the sample comprised 99 in-service teachers ($M_{age} = 44.5$, $SD = 11.1$; 61.5% females), with years of working experience ranging from one to 40 ($M_{years} = 14.2$, $SD = 11.5$). Fifteen (15%) reported having an immigrant background. All participants reported they received a previous training on inclusive education, intercultural competence, or cultural diversity. One participant only partially filled out the demographics but left blank the scale items, and thus was removed for later analyses. Missing values on the main variables were 2.8%.

Teachers were recruited from 17 secondary schools that agreed to participate in the study (five academic track schools, Gymnasium, and twelve integrated secondary schools). Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Berlin Senate Committee for Education, Youth, and Science and the principals of the schools who agreed to participate in the study. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was given to participants, completed during the researchers' visits to the schools or returned in pre-sealable envelopes by post. Data were collected in April through July 2016.

6.2.3 Measures

Teachers' beliefs for *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*, as well as for multiculturalism and polyculturalism were measured using the same items in Study 1.

Cultural diversity-related stress reflects the extent to which teacher's personal and professional well-being is negatively affected by dealing with a culturally heterogeneous student body (Tatar and Horenczyk 2003). Cultural diversity-related stress was assessed by the Cultural Diversity-Related Stress scale (five items) ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*) (e.g., "Working daily with students from different cultural backgrounds frustrates me").

Table 3 Multiple Regression Model for the Prediction of Cultural Diversity-Related Stress in Study 2

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Stressing Similarities	-0.01 (-0.34, 0.36)	0.18	0.01	0.73
Ignoring Differences	0.17 (0.04, 0.30)	0.07	0.27	0.01
Multiculturalism	-0.24 (-0.60, 0.11)	0.18	-0.19	0.17
Polyculturalism	-0.06 (-0.34, 0.23)	0.14	-0.05	0.99
Gender (1 = Male)	-0.12 (-0.43, 0.19)	0.16	-0.08	0.42
Years of experience	0.00 (-0.01, 0.02)	0.01	0.05	0.56

N = 98. Confidence intervals reported in parenthesis. Multiple $R^2 = 16$; Adjusted $R^2 = 11$

6.2.4 Plan of data analysis

A CFA including latent factors was fitted with the sample of Study 2, following the same procedure (one factor versus two factor solution) and estimator (MLR) as in Study 1. Mean differences and correlations between *stressing similarities*, *ignoring differences*, multiculturalism, and polyculturalism were also explored. Finally, we performed a multiple regression analysis in which all ideologies were entered simultaneously and regressed on cultural diversity-related stress, while controlling for gender and years of teaching experience.

6.2.5 Results

As in Study 1, when performing CFA, we found that a two-factor solution fitted the data better than a one-factor solution, after dropping the same item that was found problematic in Study 1. These results demonstrate that also for the sample of in-service teachers, the *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* ideologies were two separate constructs but not opposing as the small negative latent correlation indicated ($r = -0.06$, $p = 0.73$). Table 1 (last three rows) includes fit indices comparing the factor solutions.

Similar to pre-service teachers in Study 1, mean differences with in-service teachers revealed a stronger endorsement of the *stressing similarities* ideology ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 0.55$) than for the *ignoring differences* ideology ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.18$), $M_{Diff} = 3.33$ [3.07, 3.60], $t(97) = 25.25$, $p < 0.001$. All correlations were in the same directions as in Study 1, with *ignoring differences* beliefs being negatively correlated to multiculturalism and polyculturalism, and *stressing similarities* beliefs being positively correlated (Table 2).

The final regression model predicting cultural diversity-related stress is reported in Table 3. The four ideologies accounted for 16% of variance, indicating that only *ignoring differences* ideology ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$) predicted cultural diversity-related stress, controlling for gender and years of teaching experience.

7 General discussion

The color-evasive ideology is widespread in globalized societies and their educational settings. Yet research on color-evasiveness has shown mixed results, due perhaps to the conceptual confusion around its meaning and measurement. Across two cross-sectional field studies with pre-service and in-service teachers, we tested whether two forms of color-evasive ideology—*stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*—can be theoretically and empirically distinguished in teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity in education.

The CFA results of both studies showed a close similarity of the indices of the two-factor solution, fitting the empirical data to the theoretical proposition that the *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* ideologies are two distinct forms of color-evasiveness (Rosenthal and Levy 2010; Whitley and Webster 2019). These findings support previous studies that assessed different forms of color-evasiveness (Byrd 2015; Pedersen et al. 2015) but have not directly compared them. Our study therefore extends the present knowledge by comparing the most common empirically supported form of color-evasiveness within the German context, namely the *stressing similarities* ideology (Hachfeld et al. 2011; Schachner 2019) with the most classical operationalization of this ideology in U.S. literature, namely the *ignoring differences* ideology (Byrd 2015; Neville et al. 2000). To our knowledge this is the first study to assess the *ignoring differences* ideology in the German context applying it to teachers' beliefs.

In both studies, mean differences showed that participants endorsed the *stressing similarities* ideology more strongly than the *ignoring differences* ideology. Our results are in line with studies conducted in Germany that found that the *stressing similarities* ideology seems to be the dominant ideology in the school context and among pre-service teachers (Hachfeld et al. 2015; Schwarzenthal et al. 2020). At the same time, this pattern of findings does not align with U.S. studies, which showed that the *ignoring differences* ideology is predominant among pre- and in-service teachers (Cadenas et al. 2020; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2020; Walker 2011; Wang et al. 2014). This suggests that the *stressing similarities* ideology could be traced in the unique socio-historical context of Germany (Schachner 2019).

When looking more closely at the differences between the two forms of color-evasiveness, we found that in-service teachers were relatively low in the *ignoring differences* ideology compared to pre-service teachers. The experience of teaching diverse classes as such may increase the beliefs that the *ignoring differences* ideology is an unsuitable perspective (Glock et al. 2019). Conversely, pre-service teachers, who are at an initial stage of their career path, may have not yet had respective opportunities to critically analyse the *ignoring differences* ideology. These findings raise an important issue: during initial teaching preparation teacher educators should explore pre-service teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity and challenge perspectives that reject student's cultural differences.

Consistent with previous research on teachers' beliefs (Hachfeld et al. 2015, 2011) and school climate research (Schwarzenthal et al. 2020), we found moderately strong correlations among *stressing similarities*, multiculturalism, and polyculturalism. Thus, teachers can embrace elements of different belief ideologies, which could

be seen as desirable given that none of the ideologies represents a panacea (Hahn et al. 2015; Rosenthal and Levy 2010). However, in both studies, our research found that the *ignoring differences* form of color-evasiveness was strongly related negatively to multiculturalism and polyculturalism, and only weakly, negative related to the *stressing similarities* ideology. This finding supports the difference of focus in the two forms of color-evasiveness (Rosenthal and Levy 2010; Whitley and Webster 2019). Whereas the *ignoring differences* ideology emphasizes the individual independence of the social group, the *stressing similarities* ideology acknowledges the importance of group memberships while considering how groups may be similar despite also having unique characteristics. The latter also applies to the mechanisms behind multiculturalism and polyculturalism. Collectively, these results speak in favour of considering the *ignoring differences* ideology as opposed to multiculturalism and polyculturalism ideologies, but not to *stressing similarities*. In essence, *stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences* may in any case be considered as part of a “spectrum” of the color-evasive ideology because they both focus on devaluing differences.

Finally, in Study 2, only the *ignoring differences* ideology positively predicted cultural diversity-related stress. This finding is in line with other studies suggesting that the *ignoring differences* ideology is detrimental to psychological adjustment (Celeste et al. 2019; Gutentag et al. 2018; Tatar et al. 2011). The *ignoring differences* ideology should be considered unrealistic and too cognitively demanding, and not a way to buffer possible concerns for teachers who are called to work with culturally and ethnically diverse students.

8 Limitations and future directions

The current study has some limitations. First, we did not pre-register our hypotheses, which should now be the norm to enhance the reliability and the transparency of research findings. Another limitation refers to the cross-sectional nature of both studies, relying only on self-reported measures, and in particular the sample size of Study 2 is relatively small. However, our study offered support for our hypothesis in two separate studies and samples of pre- and in-service teachers. On a related note, further research on the differences between pre- and in-service teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity in education is warranted. We encourage future studies to test whether the endorsement of different forms of color-evasiveness varies as a result of a migration experience or background. A recent study conducted among pre-service teachers in Germany found that teachers with a migration background showed more favorable attitudes towards dealing with diversity than non-immigrant pre-service teachers (Syring et al. 2019). Lastly, our findings must not be generalized to teaching behaviors, as our dependent variable in Study 2 referred to psychosocial functioning in culturally diverse classrooms. Future research could test the unique effects of the related forms of color-evasiveness on teaching behaviors and on student outcomes.

9 Conclusions

The main impetus of the current study emerged from the inconsistent use of color-evasiveness found in the international as well as German literature. We offered some theoretical and empirical support clarifying in which ways those two forms of color-evasiveness—*stressing similarities* and *ignoring differences*—are distinct. We could confirm earlier findings which highlighted the difference in focus of the two forms. In doing so, we hope to raise awareness of how these important constructs may be further studied and addressed with teachers. Finally, attention should be directed particularly to counteract *ignoring differences* beliefs as their unique effects may be related to undesirable consequences for teachers and students.

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Appendix

Table 4 Items of the four ideologies

Stressing Similarities

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Schools should aim to foster and support the similarities between students from different cultural backgrounds.
<i>Ein Ziel der Schule sollte es sein, Gemeinsamkeiten von Kindern mit unterschiedlichem kulturellem Hintergrund zu fördern</i> |
| 2. | In the classroom, it is important that students of different origins recognize the similarities that exist between them.
<i>Im Unterricht ist es wichtig, dass SchülerInnen unterschiedlicher kultureller Herkunft Gemeinsamkeiten erkennen</i> |
| 3. | Children should learn that people of different cultural background often have a lot in common.
<i>Kinder sollten lernen, dass Menschen verschiedener kultureller Herkunft oft sehr viel gemeinsam haben</i> |
| 4. | When there are conflicts between students of different origins, they should be encouraged to resolve the argument by finding common ground.
<i>Bei Konflikten zwischen SchülerInnen unterschiedlicher Herkunft sollten sie angeregt werden, den Streit gewaltfrei zu lösen und Gemeinsamkeiten zu finden</i> |

Table 4 (Continued)*Ignoring Differences*

1. Schools should encourage teaching staff to ignore cultural differences.
Schulen sollten Lehrer ermutigen, kulturelle Unterschiede zu ignorieren
2. It is important to ignore differences between students from different cultural backgrounds.
Es ist wichtig, Unterschiede zwischen Schülern mit verschiedenen kulturellen Hintergründen zu ignorieren
3. In the classroom, talking about cultural differences is divisive.
Im Unterricht über kulturelle Unterschiede zu reden, stiftet Uneinigkeit
- 4.^a It is important to consider that cultural background is irrelevant for how students are treated.
Es ist wichtig zu bedenken, dass der kulturelle Hintergrund irrelevant dafür ist, wie Schüler behandelt werden

Multiculturalism

1. Dealing with cultural diversity should be taught in teacher education courses.
Während der Lehrerausbildung sollte der Umgang mit kultureller Vielfalt unterrichtet werden
2. In the classroom, it is important to make students aware to differences between cultures.
Im Unterricht ist es wichtig, für Unterschiede in den verschiedenen Kulturen zu sensibilisieren
3. Respecting other cultures is something that children should learn as early as possible.
Andere Kulturen zu respektieren ist etwas, das Kinder möglichst früh lernen sollten
4. It is important for students to learn that other cultures can have different values.
Es ist wichtig für Kinder zu lernen, dass andere Kulturen auch andere Wertvorstellungen haben können
5. When meeting with parents of different cultural backgrounds, it is important to understand and empathize with their perspectives.
Bei Begegnungen mit Eltern mit anderen kulturellen Hintergründen ist es wichtig, ihre Perspektiven zu verstehen und sich in sie hineinzuversetzen

Polyculturalism

1. Talking about how different cultural groups impact one another is something children should learn.
Kinder sollten lernen, darüber zu reden, dass verschiedene kulturelle Gruppen einander beeinflussen
2. Understanding that culture change over time should taught in teacher training courses.
In der LehrerInnenausbildung sollte vermittelt werden, dass Kulturen sich über die Zeit verändern
3. In the classroom, it is important to talk about how there are many connections between different cultures.
Es ist wichtig, im Unterricht über die vielfältigen Verbindungen zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen zu reden
4. Schools should aim at sharing traditions and perspectives of students from different cultural backgrounds.
Schulen sollten sich zum Ziel setzen, Traditionen und Sichtweisen von SchülerInnen mit unterschiedlichen kulturellen Hintergründen zu vermitteln

Responses are given on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*)

^aThis item in *ignoring differences* was dropped

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