

# FAMILY AND SOCIAL GENERATION COMPARED IN TERMS OF ETHNIC PREJUDICE IN YOUNG ADULTS: A STUDY WITH FAMILY TRIADS

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The present work proposed, first, to investigate parents' and offspring's similarity in terms of ethnic prejudice using appropriate measurement strategies for interdependent data, such as dyadic correlations (Phase I), and, secondly, to understand if this similarity can be attributed to a specificity of the family relation or to the social generation, through comparison between real dyads and pseudodyads (Phase II). One-hundred family triads composed of mother, father, and young adult child participated in the research, for a total of 300 subjects. Each participant was administered a questionnaire, containing Akrami, Ekehammar, and Araya (2000) Classic and Modern Prejudice Scale in the recent Italian version. Although Phase I showed a good similarity between parents and offspring with respect to response profiles, Phase II revealed that this similarity was not attributable to the specificity of the family relation, but to the generation one belongs.

Key words: Ethnic prejudice; Dyadic correlations; Cultural stereotype; Pseudodyads; Social generation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Whether in the realm of the scientific literature on parent-child relations or at a common sense level, one expects a certain influence or, at least, a similarity between the ethnic prejudice of parents and that of offspring (O'Bryan, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2004). Nevertheless, empirical evidence that would demonstrate such a relation struggles to emerge in an unequivocal manner. Some studies conducted on families with pre-school and school-age children do, in fact, show quite a high similarity (Epstein & Komorita, 1966; Katz, 2003), others show only moderate similarity (Carlson & Iovini, 1985; Moscher & Scodel, 1960; O'Bryan et al., 2004), while still others show none at all (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Davey, 1983; Katz, 1976; Radke-Yarrow, Trager, & Miller, 1952).

There is also a line of research that demonstrates the presence of negative correlations between parents and children belonging to minority groups (Branch & Newcombe, 1980, 1986).

In contrast, the small number of studies on adolescents seem to agree on the significant similarity between parents and offspring as regards prejudice and racism (Moscher & Scodel, 1960). The results that emerge in terms of similarity reveal that it is only during adolescence that this peculiarity becomes salient (Castelli, Carraro, Tomelleri, & Amari, 2007). Recent studies have highlighted that parents' and offspring's prejudice is strongly correlated only when the latter

identify with their parents (Castelli, Zogmaister, & Tomelleri 2009; Sinclair, Dunn, & Lowery, 2005).

A possible explanation for the divergences cited above might be found in a “blind” interpretation of socializing theories: the studies just described often hyperidealized the family’s role in socialization, considering it as the only actor at work in a drama that is actually very complex. Indeed, the family is not placed in a “social vacuum,” and in this context it is of fundamental importance to grasp one of the family’s distinctive features: its interconnection with the “social” realm.

In order to understand this connection, the concept of generation, which is intrinsic to the family, must be examined more in depth. “The etymology [of generation] refers to origin, in the sense of belonging-community; therefore, besides the biological aspect, it also includes a symbolic and cultural aspect” (Zanniello, 2003, pp. 605-606). It is within this conceptual framework that the idea of generation is seen as family lineage and social collocation: the position occupied within the kinship line determines the family and social generation to which one belongs (Bengtson & Achenbaum, 1993). “Generation is the critical pivotal point between family role-status and social role-status” (Scabini, 2009, p. 15). In fact, parents do not only perform a role defined within the family (being a mother or father) but are, at the same time, adults who possess and put into practice certain socio-cultural characteristics which are specific to being an adult. The complexity of this “dual” role lies in the fact that one facet cannot exclude the other. Intrafamilial exchange is deeply connected to interfamilial and social exchange. The family as a whole (microsystem) interacts and reacts to changes in society (Scabini, 1995).

Thus, the family’s role is complex. The relationship between person, family, and cultural context is inclusive in nature, and the family is situated in an intermediate space between the two: “[The family] thus has a function of mediating the exchanges that occur between the person and the sociocultural context” (Cigoli & Scabini, 2000, p. 37).

Although recognized at a theoretical level, the interaction between social and family realms with respect to beliefs, values, and attitudes has been neglected by research for the most part, probably because such complexity is found to be difficult to “measure” in methodological terms. The few empirical studies on the topic mostly aimed to identify which of the two impacts individuals the most, assuming a competitive relationship (Bengtson, 1975) rather than an interconnection one. Fewer studies investigated a specificity connected to family belonging compared, not necessarily in terms of opposition, to the social sphere. Nevertheless, these studies focus only on values and do not address the connection between the social and familial realms within research on prejudice (see, for example, the works by Barni & Ranieri, 2010; Knafo & Schwartz, 2003).

While this intertwinement has been addressed as regards other topics in psychology — such as values — to the best of our knowledge no research tends in this direction on ethnic prejudice.

Likewise, no studies seem to have been conducted on young adults, a phase of the life cycle that, if read in the light of its continuity with the research just described, should be the one with the greatest similarity between parents and offspring. Moreover, little attention has been given to the variable of the child’s gender, yet mothers and fathers have different roles in the transmission of values, norms, and attitudes (O’Bryan et al., 2004) and, therefore, presumably also of ethnic prejudice, in the same way that daughters and sons respond differently to the socializing strategies proposed by fathers and mothers (Scabini, 1995).

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### The Interdependence of Family Data

Beyond the numerous theoretical approaches that have addressed the family from multiple points of view, the aspect that challenges researchers of all stripes is how to measure those relational aspects that constitute the family proprium. In order to analyze family relations, information must be gathered from a number of family members. Thus, if one intends to analyze the father-child relation, it will not be enough to gather information exclusively from the child's perspective, but it will also be necessary to compare this point of view with what the father states regarding his relation with his child (Lanz & Rosnati, 2002). Family members are interdependent by nature. Kenny and Judd (1986) highlighted three different factors giving rise to the non-independence of data in groups, and specifically, in the family: 1) the composition of the group, in which people are not randomly assigned to the group, and roles are not interchangeable; 2) a common destiny, determined by life environment and by having shared expectations for the future; 3) reciprocal influence that characterizes the relations between people belonging to the same family.

Furthermore, if we specifically analyze family relations as the object of our study, it is necessary to consider that different family members respond with reference to shared objects/relations, opinions, and events. If father and son are asked to judge their communication, there will exist a certain resemblance between the two responses, and the two measurements will be found to be strongly connected with each other.

In order to deal with data that assume non-independence (or interdependence), suitable and specific processing modalities should be employed that are situated outside commonly used traditional statistical analyses (Lanz & Rosnati, 2002).

There are multiple strategies for taking into account the specificity of relational data (for a review of these, see Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Dyadic indexes constitute an example of such a specific modality.

A dyadic measurement reflects the contribution of two people, although the function of this contribution can be of different weight (Bond & Kenny, 2002). A series of dyadic indexes, which are more or less similar to one another, can be found in the literature: each score makes it possible to highlight an aspect of the relation while neglecting others. This is due to the fact that making sense of complex family relations cannot easily be reduced to a number (Kenny et al., 2006).

The application of these techniques underpins the adoption of a research approach, such as the one proposed here, which responds to the requirements of true family research. In this type of research, besides the object under investigation, the analytical unit is also constituted by the family or by several of its subsystems, and the level of analysis is potentially relational.

Luo and Klohnen (2005) and Zentner and Renaud (2007) spoke of dyadic indexes as elective strategies in an approach centered on the person (Person-Centered Approach) or on the couple (Couple-Centered Approach), both aimed at studying subjects "in relation" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

### Similarity between Parents and Offspring: Unique or Stereotypical?

As early as 1955 Cronbach had noticed that the members of a dyad can appear similar, not because they really are so, but in as much as they answer in a "stereotypical" manner. In this understanding of the term, "stereotypical" indicates a typical or normative tendency in people's

responses with respect to a set of variables (Kenny et al., 2006), which can be attributed to their belonging to a specific cultural context. For example, parents and children are traditionally conceived of as exponents of different subcultures: the generational dimension is found to be salient to the point of distinguishing members who belong to different generations (Coleman, 1961; Emmer, 1993). The same occurs for husbands and wives: a practical example of this comes from Kenny et al. (2006, p. 331): “Consider as an example the correspondence between husbands’ and wives’ food preferences. Finding that husbands and wives on average have similar food preferences may not be as interesting as it might appear, because such a finding can result simply because most people generally like ice cream and do not like liver. Ordinarily, we do not merely want to know whether they are more similar to one another; rather, we want to know whether they are more similar to one another than are members of a randomly paired dyad.”

Gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, and political orientation are some examples of other equally important subcultures (Smith & Mackie, 2007).

Different ways of calculating the cultural stereotype exist (for a survey, see Kenny et al., 2006): one is that used by Kenny and Acitelli (1994) who operationalized the stereotypical response profile in terms of the mean of the responses given by members who are believed to share the stereotype (e.g., the mean of responses given by female members and by male members). In the present work, pseudodyads (randomly assigned couples of adults and young adults who are not linked by kinship bonds) were used (Corsini, 1956); these were examined in depth in Phase II of this paper.

## AIMS OF THE STUDY

Phase I aimed to investigate, by means of different analytical strategies (Pearson’s “traditional”  $r$  correlation and dyadic correlations), the similarity in response profiles between parents and young adult offspring (mother-young adult son/daughter and father-young adult son/daughter), conceiving of them, in the case of  $r$  correlations, as social groups (the group of fathers, of mothers, and of offspring) and, in the case of dyadic correlations, as specific members of a couple (each mother with her own son/daughter; each father with his own son/daughter).

Phase II, instead, had the goal of understanding whether the similarity found through the calculation of dyadic correlations in Phase I could be attributed to the specificity of the dyad and, therefore, to its members’ being in relation, or to the social context which, in the present work, was taken to mean “social generation.”

## METHOD

### Participants and Procedure

One-hundred families, composed of one young adult child, mother, and father (for a total of 300 subjects), 99% of whom resided in the same home, participated in the research. The children, 30% of which were male and 70% female, had an age range between 20 and 29 years ( $M = 22.78$ ,  $SD = 2.77$ ). Males and females did not differ with respect to age [ $t(99) = 1.75$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $M_{Males} = 23.55$ ,  $M_{Females} = 22.49$ ]. Among children, 51% were students, 21.6% workers, 23.5% combined study and work, and 3.9% were not engaged in any activity. Mothers had an age rang-

ing between 35 and 66 years ( $M = 49.82$ ,  $SD = 6.42$ ); 58.5% of them held a job at the time of data collection, 41.5% were not employed, being housewives, pensioners, unemployed, disabled, etc. Fathers had an age range between 41 and 73 years ( $M = 53.70$ ,  $SD = 6.38$ ); 85.5% held a job at the time of data collection, and 14.5% were not employed, being pensioners, unemployed, disabled, etc. Both phases used the same participants.

### Recruitment

Data was collected in northern Italy. The recruitment of participants took place separately for the young adults and the parents.

The recruitment of the former mostly took place during class time in two universities, and six different departments. Students were asked to take home an envelope containing three questionnaires, to fill out one of them, and to have the other two filled out by their parents. Parents were recruited in shops, factories, cooperatives, and associations. Each was asked to take home an envelope containing three questionnaires, to fill out one of them, to have one filled out by his/her partner and another by his/her son/daughter. All participants to whom the questionnaires were distributed were advised in advance that participation would be free and voluntary and data would be used for the sole purpose of research in an aggregate form. Each participant signed the informed consent form.

### Materials

Each family member was administered the same questionnaire containing, in addition to socio-demographic variables, the Classical and Modern Racial Prejudice by Akrami, Ekehammar, and Araya (2000) in the recent Italian version by Gattino, Miglietta, and Testa (2011). The theoretical framework of this scale is found in the literature that consider two focus on the manifest and hidden forms of prejudice. The two dimensions of the scale were constructed on the basis of the theorization offered by McConahay (1986) in which the distinction is made, within modern prejudice, between negation of the continuity/relevance of discrimination, antagonism with respect to immigrants' requests, and resentment toward favorable measures for immigrants.

In the study presented here, the target-category chosen was that of "Africans" in that it represents one of the populations with an established history of migration to Italy.

The scale was composed of 17 items, eight underpinning the Classic Prejudice dimension and nine the Modern Prejudice dimension. Each item ranged from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*). The two dimensions underpinning each scale turned out to be mostly reliable as regards Cronbach's test for all family members involved (Classic Prejudice:  $\alpha_{Mothers} = .84$ ,  $\alpha_{Fathers} = .72$ ,  $\alpha_{Young adults} = .87$ ; Modern Prejudice:  $\alpha_{Mothers} = .82$ ,  $\alpha_{Fathers} = .86$ ,  $\alpha_{Young adults} = .78$ ).

### PHASE I

The aims of the present work were: to describe the level of ethnic prejudice of parents and their offspring in relation to the latter's gender; to measure the degree of resemblance be-

tween the prejudice of offspring and of their parents through the use of specific dyadic indexes (dyadic correlations).

## Data Analysis

### *Descriptive Analyses*

In order to achieve the first aim, namely to describe the level of personal ethnic prejudice of young adults and their parents, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for the two scales used.

### *The Dyadic Correlations ( $r_{mean}$ )*

In order to achieve the second aim, the dyadic correlations ( $r_{mean}$ ) were calculated. These were intended to detect the degree of similarity between the participants' response profiles in terms of their family members' ethnic prejudice (young adult child-mother, young adult child-father). Dyadic correlations fit into a larger group of similarity indexes (in this connection, see, for example, Kenny et al., 2006). The calculation of this index was based on the well-known formula of Pearson's  $r$ , with the difference that the degree of association did not have to do with the two variables measured on a set of subjects, but on a set of scores measured on subjects within the same dyad. Specifically in the present study, the group of parents was not compared to the whole group of offsprings by means of dyadic correlations (as would happen in the case of Pearson's  $r$ ), but, rather, each parent was compared to his/her own child. Hence not all children were related to all parents, but each child was related to his/her own parent.

$$r_{mean} = \frac{\sum (X_{pa} - M_{pa}) \cdot (X_{ch} - M_{ch})}{\sqrt{\sum (X_{pa} - M_{pa})^2 \cdot \sum (X_{ch} - M_{ch})^2}}$$

$X_{pa}$  = parent's score for item  $i$ ;

$M_{pa}$  = parent's mean score for items  $i$ ;

$X_{ch}$  = child's score for item  $i$ ;

$M_{ch}$  = child's mean score for items  $i$ .

The dyadic correlation index is exclusively sensitive to the variable's shape: "Generally, correspondence in shape is thought to be the most important component of the dyadic index: the more similar the shape, the greater the similarity" (Kenny et al., 2006, p. 325). On the other hand, it does not provide information on possible differences of means (level), nor does it take into account variability in the spread (Bernieri, Zuckerman, Koestner, & Rosenthal, 1994; Kenny et al., 2006). For this reason, the correlation reaches its maximum in the case of overlap between the two profiles as well as in the case in which the two profiles present parallel, but not superimposed, trends.

Like  $r$  correlation, the dyadic correlation index is exclusively sensitive to the variable's shape; high and positive scores indicated that the two partners had similar trends and in the same direction: when value referring to one partner increased, so did the value of the other. On the



other hand, high and negative scores indicated that the two partners had similar trends, but in the opposite direction: when the value of one partner increased, the value of the other partner decreased. A correlation tending to 0 indicated, instead, that the two response profiles compared were neither similar nor dissimilar to each other.

The literature does not provide universally accepted criteria allowing us to define a correlation as being unambiguously either high or low given that this definition is dependent on numerous other factors, such as the relation which is thought to bind two variables to each other, the size of the sample, as well as the number of responses that make up the profile in the case of dyadic correlations. In general, correlation coefficients between .30 and .49 in absolute value are considered to be of mean magnitude; coefficients less than or greater than these cut-offs are considered to be, respectively, of limited and high magnitude (Cohen, 1988).

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analyses

Respondents' means were found to revolve around very similar mean levels on the Classic and Modern Prejudice Scale (Table 1). The *t*-test analysis for the paired samples did not produce statistically significant differences between family members for any of the means considered as regards either Modern Prejudice or Classic Prejudice. Moreover, significant differences did not emerge with respect to parents' and offspring's means if we consider gender for either of the two dimensions of the scale.

TABLE 1  
Ranges, mean scores, and standard deviations on the Classic and Modern Prejudice Scale

|                            | Minimum<br>(1) | Maximum<br>(5) | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Families with a son        |                |                |          |           |
| Classic Prejudice son      | 1.13           | 4.63           | 2.41     | 0.77      |
| Classic Prejudice mother   | 1.38           | 3.38           | 2.58     | 0.49      |
| Classic Prejudice father   | 1.00           | 3.25           | 2.56     | 0.57      |
| Modern Prejudice son       | 1.67           | 4.56           | 2.75     | 0.63      |
| Modern Prejudice mother    | 2.11           | 4.00           | 2.83     | 0.43      |
| Modern Prejudice father    | 1.67           | 4.22           | 2.88     | 0.60      |
| Families with a daughter   |                |                |          |           |
| Classic Prejudice daughter | 1.13           | 3.75           | 2.35     | 0.68      |
| Classic Prejudice mother   | 1.13           | 3.63           | 2.38     | 0.55      |
| Classic Prejudice father   | 1.00           | 3.50           | 2.46     | 0.56      |
| Modern Prejudice daughter  | 1.44           | 4.11           | 2.64     | 0.61      |
| Modern Prejudice mother    | 1.56           | 4.22           | 2.79     | 0.53      |
| Modern Prejudice father    | 1.56           | 4.11           | 2.79     | 0.59      |

## Dyadic Correlations

The degree of similarity between the response profile for the ethnic prejudice of parents and their offspring was determined using dyadic correlations ( $r_{mean}$ ). For each dyad, an index between the parent's scores and those of his/her own child was calculated on each dimension of the scale. The analytical unit of the group of scores was thus the dyad.

Results obtained from Pearson's  $r$  and dyadic correlations are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
A comparison of Pearson's  $r$  correlations and dyadic correlations

|                   | Son-Mother |            | Son-Father |            | Daughter-Mother |            | Daughter-Father |            |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|                   | $r$        | $r_{mean}$ | $r$        | $r_{mean}$ | $r$             | $r_{mean}$ | $r$             | $r_{mean}$ |
| Classic Prejudice | .13        | .33        | .14        | .36        | -.10            | .35        | .03             | .30        |
| Modern Prejudice  | .34        | .16        | .22        | .20        | .09             | .11        | .03             | .14        |

The levels of similarity between parents and offspring showed different results depending on the dimension and the dyad investigated. In general, the Classic Prejudice dimension obtained higher mean values than Modern Prejudice, in which no dyadic correlation exceeded the threshold of .30, established by the literature as the mean (Cohen, 1988). With respect to Classic Prejudice, all values can be defined as being of mean magnitude: in particular, the son-father dyad had  $r_{mean}$  of .36, and the daughter-mother dyad had  $r_{mean}$  of .35. Thus, a greater gender-specific similarity between parents and offspring seems to be present. However, the son-mother and daughter-father dyads also had acceptable  $r_{means}$  (.33 and .30, respectively).

Regarding Modern Prejudice, on the other hand, values were all very low. Moreover, it is interesting in this connection that Pearson's correlations turned out to be of null magnitude, and none of them was statistically significant, except for mother's and son's Modern Prejudice, which were correlated with values of mean magnitude; the correlation, however, was nonsignificant ( $r = .34$ , n.s.).

It would seem, therefore, that Classic Prejudice of the son/daughter-father and son/daughter-mother dyads is more specific to the family relationship than Modern Prejudice is. Taking gender into account, the  $t$ -tests for independent samples did not reveal significant differences for any dimension investigated by means of dyadic correlations; thus, gender did not turn out to be an important variable in the similarities/differences between parents and offspring as regards the prejudice dimensions under investigation (Classic Prejudice father-child:  $t < 1$ ; Classic Prejudice mother-child:  $t < 1$ ; Modern Prejudice father-child:  $t < 1$ ; Modern Prejudice mother-child:  $t < 1$ ).

## PHASE II

The aim of the present phase was to compare the dyadic correlations that emerged from real couples with pseudodyads (randomly assigned couples) in order to understand whether a dif-



ferent generational stereotype was operated for parents and offspring or whether the similarity of response profiles could be attributed to a specificity of the family dyad.

## Data Analysis

### *The Stereotypical Effect*

To measure the stereotypical effect, we followed the procedure proposed by Corsini (1956) in which each child is randomly paired with a parent who is not his or her own. The underlying logic is that if the similarity of the dyadic correlations is due to the family relation, the  $r_{mean}$  will be distinctly higher for the real dyads than for the pseudodyads. Vice versa, if the similarity can be attributed to the stereotypical effect and, thus — according to the interpretation of the term used here — to generation, differences will not emerge between real and pseudodyads. In his research, for example, Corsini (1956) found a dyadic correlation of .36 between real couples and .30 between pseudodyads, and concluded that the similarity he found was actually due to a stereotypical effect rather than to a family relation.

In the present work, in order to calculate the pseudodyads, the group of offspring was randomly combined with that of parents, changing the offsprings' IDs so as not to associate children and parents of the same family. To do this, the order of the offspring's IDs was inverted so that the child of the family with ID1 got ID100, the child of the family with ID2 got ID99, and so on.

## RESULTS

As Table 3 reveals, comparing the dyadic correlations found in Phase I with the pseudodyads, very similar values for all the dimensions under investigation emerged. Indeed, no statistically significant differences were observed between the pseudodyads and the real dyads for any of the investigated dimensions. In this case, it can thus be stated that, because differences between family members and non-family members did not emerge, the similarity, revealed by dyadic indexes, was not specific to the family relation but was, instead, a product of the generation one belongs to. The stereotypical effect, namely, the component socially shared by family members, thus, played an important role.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main goals of the present work were: to describe the ethnic prejudice of young adult offspring and their parents; to measure the level of similarity with respect to such constructs to measure the level of similarity with respect to prejudice within the young adult-mother and young adult-father dyads; and to establish whether any similarity found could be attributed to a specificity of the family dyad or to social generation.

TABLE 3  
A comparison of dyadic correlations for real couples and pseudodyads

|                   | Son-Mother                      |                                  |     | Son-Father                      |                                  |     | Daughter-Mother                 |                                  |     | Daughter-Father                 |                                  |     |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
|                   | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>real dyads | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>pseudodyads | $t$ | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>real dyads | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>pseudodyads | $t$ | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>real dyads | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>pseudodyads | $t$ | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>real dyads | $r_{\text{mean}}$<br>pseudodyads | $t$ |
| Classic Prejudice | .33                             | .35                              | < 1 | .36                             | .29                              | < 1 | .35                             | .33                              | < 1 | .30                             | .28                              | < 1 |
| Modern Prejudice  | .16                             | .16                              | < 1 | .20                             | .19                              | < 1 | .11                             | .10                              | < 1 | .14                             | .12                              | < 1 |

The descriptive analyses in Phase I revealed a medium level of ethnic prejudice in parents and offspring that was quite similar in means and without any differences even relating to the children's gender. However, for Classic Prejudice only, this similarity was not only the means but also the response profile: in fact, the dyadic correlations of this dimension turned out to be of mean magnitude, demonstrating a part of specificity in the dyads, and were thus apparently due to the family members' being in relation with one another.

Phase II, on the other hand, allowed us to compare real dyads with pseudodyads, that is, young adult-mother and young adult-father couples where the children did not belong to the same families as the parents (randomly assigned couples). No statistical differences emerged between real couples and pseudodyads, however. Thus, it became clear that this relation was not specific to the family dyads, but was the product of the generation one belongs to.

These results afford several initial, albeit partial, interpretive keys regarding the heterogeneity of the scientific panorama on the topic of the parent-child relation with respect to ethnic prejudice.

In the first place, some considerations can be proposed on the analytical methodology that was investigated. The literature lacks studies investigating the relation between parents' and offspring's prejudice through analyses of specific data on the involved actors, namely, studies adopting the family research approach with the family as analytical unit and a relational level of analysis. This way of approaching data is well-known in other fields of psychology, such as, for example, the study of values, but it has not been applied to the study of prejudice.

Secondly, it is important to consider the age range under investigation. Traditionally, the literature of this field has concentrated on pre-school and school-age children, and only recently on adolescents, completely neglecting the young adult age group. However, this phase of the life cycle turns out to be particularly interesting in the Italian context where it is common for offspring to remain in the parental home beyond 30 years of age. Understanding the interplay between the family and social spheres thus becomes even more significant for this age group. Therefore, rereading the findings emerged from the present work in light of the literature on family relations, it can be pointed out that, because adolescence is by definition a phase in which, especially in Italy (Scabini, Marta, & Lanz, 2006), the family's influence is still strongly felt, it is not surprising to find a relation between parents' prejudice and their children's. The following phase of the life cycle — characterized by the progression of the individuation-separation from parents process, despite children's continued residence in the parental household — on the other hand, seems to be marked by a greater adhesion to the attitudes of the young adults' generation as opposed to attitudes conveyed by the family. Research shows an enhancement in the quality of the relation between parents and young adult offspring as compared to the adolescent phase, and also a realignment between parents and young adult children as to the perception of variables used to evaluate quality of relationship — for example, communication and support (Scabini et al., 2006). The present work demonstrates, instead, that, when the object of analysis is a distinctly social construct concerning the encounter with other groups or people in society at large, young adults align themselves with their generation, whose experiences they share and with which they will build the world of the future.

In this sense, an advantage of the present work is that it addresses the role played by both the family and the social context, conceptualizing it not in terms of mere contraposition, but as an inextricable intertwinement (Bengtson, 1975). The originality of the present contribution must,

nevertheless, come to terms with a practically non-existent literature as regards the theoretical approach adopted, the age range considered, and the statistical analyses used, which entails the impossibility of carrying out a comparison with the findings of analogous research.

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