

SUBTLE AND BLATANT PREJUDICE TOWARD CHINESE, MOROCCAN, AND POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN AN ITALIAN PROVINCE

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Eighty-eight working adults (Study 1) and 142 secondary school students (Study 2), resident in the province of Naples, completed Pettigrew and Meertens' (1995) scales of blatant and subtle prejudice toward three groups of immigrants (Chinese, Moroccans, Poles) present in the territory. Participants belonged to social categories that are likely to be more or less in a material competition with Chinese immigrants. Results showed that, in both samples, blatant prejudice was higher toward the Chinese than toward the other groups. Notably, in the second study only vocational secondary school students, who are assumed to perceive the highest competition with the Chinese group, expressed higher blatant prejudice toward them. In addition, in the student sample, also subtle prejudice toward Chinese immigrants was higher. The relations between blatant and subtle prejudice and intergroup competition are discussed.

Key words: Blatant prejudice; Intergroup relationships; Prejudice toward immigrants; Subtle prejudice.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades scholars have focused upon the new forms of prejudice, as indirect expressions of outgroup discrimination, that still exist in contemporary societies, even though social norms make prejudice against minority groups undesirable (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Hence, several two-factor theories were proposed (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) including more subtle forms of prejudice, like modern racism (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Araya, 2000; McConahay, 1986), modern sexism (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1986), aversive racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), and symbolic racism (Sears, 1988).

Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) distinguished the blatant aspects of prejudice, more controllable and socially undesirable, from the subtle aspects, relating to a more indirect and deeper refusal of the outgroup. In this theoretical and methodological approach, blatant prejudice has two components, the perceived threat from the outgroup members and the refusal of intimacy with them, while subtle prejudice consists of three components, namely the defence of traditional values, the exasperation of cultural ingroup-outgroup differences, and the denial of positive emotions toward the outgroup.

Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) developed and validated, on a large European sample, a questionnaire of 20 items (10 for blatant and 10 for subtle prejudice) measuring the two forms of prejudice. Pettigrew and Meertens' scales, which inspired a wide theoretical and methodological debate (Coenders, Scheepers, Snidermann, & Verberk, 2001; Pettigrew & Meertens, 2001), were

translated into several languages (Arcuri & Boca, 1996; Hamberger & Hewstone, 1997; Pedersen & Walker, 1997; Rueda & Navas, 1996; Vala, Brito, & Lopes, 1999), and used in many studies on prejudice against different target groups (Cariota Ferrara, Solimeno Cipriano, & Villani, 2002; La Barbera & Cariota Ferrara, 2009; Villano, 1999).

Many of these studies, however, focused upon blatant and subtle prejudice expressed by a sample of participants toward only one target. The study presented here, instead, was carried out to examine blatant and subtle prejudice toward different groups of immigrants living in the same territory and differing not only in country of origin, but also in social integration and economic activities. Our aim was to explore the peculiarities of intergroup relations which could differently affect blatant and subtle forms of prejudice.

The study was conducted in a Neapolitan province where three major groups of immigrants have settled. This province, grouping several municipalities¹ near Naples (notably San Giuseppe Vesuviano, Ottaviano, and Terzigno), has often been studied because of its particular economic history and the considerable number of Chinese immigrants (Aniello, 2001; Burroni, Crouch, Kaminska, & Valzania, 2008; Cariota Ferrara, La Barbera, & May, 2001; Ruvolo, 1999). A brief overview of this specific social context follows.

Intergroup Relations in San Giuseppe Vesuviano

San Giuseppe Vesuviano, and the municipalities near it, are strongly characterized by local textile and clothing manufacturing business. This economic activity started in the 1970s mostly in an itinerant form (e.g., little markets, door-to-door selling). Then, local entrepreneurs began to create local wholesale companies and to move on from selling to production. At first, production took place at home, involving the family, but subsequently two factors deeply transformed the system: the lack of intergenerational change and, in particular, the arrival of the Chinese. In fact, it was the Chinese immigration in the 1990s that brought a radical change in the features of the local production system. Initially, the Chinese were employed as subcontractors, making it possible for the local manufacturing system to continue and compete in the globalization era. Then, the Chinese began to replace the local entrepreneurs, buying up their stores and factories, building restaurants and hotels, increasingly changing the appearance and features of the territory, a process which is still going on (Aniello, 2001; Baculo, 2006; Cariota Ferrara et al., 2001; Ceccagno, 2007; Ruvolo, 1999).

The Chinese community is very large, unofficially estimated to range from 3000 to 4000 people. In a field study carried out in San Giuseppe Vesuviano, Ruvolo (1999) found that Chinese immigrants are perceived by the locals as a very competitive outgroup, unlike the other two major groups of immigrants, the Moroccans and the Poles. The Chinese community is frequently defined by the local press as impenetrable and closed, and locals claim that the Chinese do not comply with Italian rules and laws (e.g., lower prices and production standards, illegal work shifts and night work). "The arrival of the Chinese has generated local discontent; they are seen as *those who take away our jobs*. Given this climate of high tension, business people who use Chinese labour have difficulty in admitting it" (Ruvolo, 1999, p. 67). This pattern of Chinese immigration/competition/segregation has been called the *Wenzhou model* featuring a high entrepreneurship rate and a relevant social closure as well as ingroup self-referentiality (Pieke &

Mallee 1999). Similar patterns are reported by other studies in several different contexts (Barberis, 2008; Dei Ottati, 2009).

Eastern European immigrants (mostly from Poland) started to settle in this area in the 1980s. In the beginning, the migration involved mostly women from Poland, and later from Ukraine as well, recruited for housework. Recently, also the number of Polish males has increased. This very large group is well integrated in the socio-economic structure of the area, as they support the needs of the dominant group. Notably, mixed marriages with locals are very frequent (Russo Krauss, 2005; Ruvolo, 1999).

Immigrants from Morocco constitute one of the largest communities in Italy and in this province, too. Their migration to Italy began early, in the 1960s, when they started working as packmen. For a long period, they bought their merchandise from clothing and textile traders in San Giuseppe Vesuviano, which greatly facilitated their settlement in this province. Like Eastern European immigrants, Moroccans are not seen by the local population as a threat for their wealth, because the lack of an economic conflict (Russo Krauss, 2005; Ruvolo, 1999).

Pilot Study

Eighteen semi-structured interviews with local key-people were carried out to examine in depth the local perception of different immigrant groups. The interviewees were three entrepreneurs, four clothing traders, three volunteer workers for humanitarian organizations, three teachers, three journalists, and two politicians, all resident in San Giuseppe Vesuviano and Ottaviano.

Overall, the content analysis of the interviews confirmed the scenario that emerged from the existing literature. The Chinese are perceived as skilled but unfair competitors, very different in culture and traditions. Notably, 15 of the 18 interviewees introduced the topic of economic competition with the Chinese group even before a specific question about it was asked. Instead, Poles were described as a necessary presence in the territory, for both families (especially Polish women) and local entrepreneurship (particularly in the building field). They were often defined as “people who work very hard,” with seven of the interviewees using the very same expression: “What would we do if they were not here?” Moreover, they were not perceived as being very distant from Italians in terms of culture, religion, and traditions.

Although Moroccans, like the Chinese, were perceived as being very different in their culture and traditions, they were nevertheless described as a useful presence for the local economy. None of the interviewees spontaneously introduced the topic of economic competition referring to Italian/Moroccan or Italian/Polish relations.

Aim and Hypotheses

In the studies described below, we tried to explore subtle and blatant prejudice in the community of San Giuseppe Vesuviano, and their relations with intergroup competition.

A number of studies confirmed the negative effects of material competition on intergroup attitudes (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005; Moghaddam, 2008; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999; Zárate, García,

Garza, & Hitlan, 2004; see also Sherif, 1967). However, as far as we know, there is still no specific study on the relationship between intergroup competition and the new forms of prejudice.

From a theoretical point of view, one would expect intergroup competition to have a greater effect on the blatant dimension, because it could give the ingroup members the chance of a non-prejudiced interpretation of their negative attitude toward the outgroup (Dovidio, Smith, Donnelly, & Gaertner, 1997; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1977). This hypothesis is supported by recent findings (Pettigrew et al., 2008) on the relation between Group Relative Deprivation (GRD) and prejudice (blatant vs. subtle). Pettigrew et al. (2008) found a significant effect of GRD on both forms of prejudice, with a stronger effect on the blatant one. In addition, they noticed that GRD not only has a direct effect on blatant prejudice, but also an indirect effect via the denial of outgroup discrimination. In other words, people who perceive they are in a socially deprived group are inclined to express a more negative attitude even by denying that the outgroup is discriminated against. As in the case of realistic competition, the GRD, too, refers to an ingroup-outgroup comparison based on groups' goals, even though relative deprivation does not necessarily recall a real situation of intergroup competition for "objective" reasons (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). We think that concrete competition could affect people in a similar way, encouraging the blatant expression of negative attitudes toward the outgroup and portraying their prejudice as non-prejudice.

Consequently, we expected the Chinese group to be the most discriminated against at the blatant, but not necessarily subtle level. Indeed, being perceived as skilled competitors on a goal-relevant dimension, the Chinese group seems to be an ideal target for discrimination based upon the perception of threat (Zárate et al., 2004).

In addition, in the studies described below, two categories of participants, namely the textile traders and vocational secondary school students are assumed to perceive to a greater extent concrete competition with the Chinese. We expected the Chinese group to be discriminated against, at the blatant but not at the subtle level,² especially by participants belonging to these *high competition* social categories.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants

The sample used in this study consisted of 88 participants of both genders (49 male, 39 female; $M_{\text{age}} = 38.6$) belonging to three job categories: traders in the textile/clothing industry ($n = 31$), traders in non-textile industry ($n = 32$), professionals ($n = 25$). The first of these categories is most likely the one with the highest level of economic conflict with the Chinese group.

Measures and Procedure

The research was introduced as a study on immigration. Participants completed the Italian version (Arcuri & Boca, 1996) of Pettigrew and Meertens' (1995) scales of blatant prejudice

(BP) and subtle prejudice (SP) toward three target groups: Chinese, Moroccans, and Poles. The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores denoting more prejudice. The order of the target presentation was counterbalanced and the questionnaire was individually completed.

Results

The reliability of the scales was satisfactory for both the blatant (Chinese, $\alpha = .86$; Moroccans, $\alpha = .85$; Poles, $\alpha = .84$) and subtle prejudice (Chinese, $\alpha = .71$; Moroccans, $\alpha = .72$; Poles, $\alpha = .63$). The scores of the respective items for both blatant and subtle prejudice were averaged to obtain a single measure to be used in the following analyses. The higher the score, the higher the prejudice.

We carried out an ANOVA with two within-participants factors (Target: Chinese vs. Moroccans vs. Poles; Type of Prejudice: Subtle vs. Blatant) and one between-participants factor (Category: Textile traders vs. Non-textile traders vs. Professionals).

The effect of the factor type of prejudice was significant, $F(1, 85) = 141.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .624$. The mean score of blatant prejudice was lower than that of subtle prejudice (Table 1). This was an expected result in Pettigrew and Meertens' (1995) theoretical and methodological framework, because subtle prejudice is assumed to be perceived as less socially undesirable than blatant prejudice. Indeed, if subtle prejudice scores were higher than blatant prejudice scores in a data set (conventionally, in more than 3% of the sample, see Arcuri & Boca, 1996), this could indicate the presence of a methodological problem, for instance, participants not being able to fully understand the items (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). So, this result suggests that participants were able to understand the meaning of items, and responded carefully.

The interaction Target \times Type of Prejudice was significant, $F(2, 84) = 17.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = .290$, supporting our prediction of different patterns of prejudice toward the target groups. At the blatant prejudice level, the main effect of Target was significant, $F(2, 84) = 17.86, p < .001, \eta^2 = .298$. Pairwise comparisons³ showed that the BP mean for the Chinese group was higher than that for the Moroccan ($p = .005$) and the Polish group ($p < .001$), and the BP mean for Moroccans was also higher than that for Poles ($p < .001$). Even in the case of subtle prejudice, the main effect of the target was significant, $F(2, 84) = 47.43, p < .001, \eta^2 = .530$. Pairwise comparisons showed that the SP mean for the Poles was lower than for the Chinese ($p < .001$) and the Moroccans ($p < .001$), while the difference between the last two groups was not significant. The Chinese group was definitely the most discriminated against at the blatant level, while at the subtle level we did not find a significant difference between Chinese and Moroccans.

Conversely, the three-way interaction Category \times Target \times Type of Prejudice was not significant, $F < 1$. The main effect of category was significant at both the blatant and subtle prejudice levels: Blatant Prejudice, $F(2, 85) = 5.64, p < .005, \eta^2 = .117$; Subtle Prejudice, $F(2, 85) = 7.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .145$. Pairwise comparisons showed that BP and SP mean scores for the professionals were always lower than BP and SP mean scores for both the textile and non-textile traders ($p < .01$), with the last two categories not differing from each other. The interaction Target \times Category was not significant for either blatant or subtle prejudice, $F_s < 1$. Hence, differences among local groups showed a constant pattern (the professionals on the one hand, the traders on the other) that did not depend on the group of immigrants.

TABLE 1
Adults' blatant and subtle prejudice toward immigrant groups

Target	Category of participants	Blatant prejudice		Subtle prejudice	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Chinese	Textile	2.90	1.00	3.51	0.62
	Non-Textile	2.91	1.02	3.65	0.64
	Professionals	2.30	1.05	3.13	0.86
	Total	2.73	1.05	3.45	0.73
Poles	Textile	2.49	0.79	3.05	0.51
	Non-Textile	2.51	1.02	3.02	0.64
	Professionals	1.71	0.53	2.39	0.49
	Total	2.28	0.89	2.85	0.62
Moroccans	Textile	2.76	0.89	3.57	0.58
	Non-Textile	2.67	0.98	3.56	0.66
	Professionals	2.11	0.90	3.17	0.85
	Total	2.54	0.96	3.45	0.71

Note. The table reports means and standard deviations for blatant and subtle prejudice. Scores range from 1 to 5.

Discussion

The first study showed a higher blatant discrimination against the Chinese group than against the other groups. This result, as already mentioned, could be attributed to the competition between the Chinese group and the locals for economic resources, which is likely to affect especially the blatant form of prejudice. At the subtle level, a different pattern of discrimination was found: the Chinese and Moroccan immigrants on the one hand and the Polish on the other. Therefore, the gap between the target groups seems to be built mostly on the social integration level, and subtle prejudice appears to be less affected by intergroup competition.

For both forms of prejudice, and toward all three target groups, the same pattern of differences between the categories of respondents was also found. The professionals on the one hand, with lower scores, the traders on the other, with higher scores. Surprisingly, no significant difference between the textile and non-textile traders emerged, and the differences between professionals and traders did not depend on the target group. Perhaps the differences in prejudice between the three respondent categories should be explained more in terms of education level (primary and secondary school for traders, university for professionals) rather than intergroup competition. The level of education is indeed, as confirmed by many studies (Arcuri & Boca, 1996; Pettigrew et al., 2008), a factor that affects subtle and blatant prejudice. In addition, a post-hoc interpretation of the lack of difference between the subcategories of traders could be that, for locals and Chinese immigrants, the conflict has extended from the textile area to other fields, such as real estate property, which could have relevant symbolic meanings, likely to also concern the workers who do not belong to the most competitive category (the textile one). It should be also taken into account that our study was carried out in a small/medium-sized community, with friendship and family bonds

involving a large part of the population, so the effect of economic competition has easily spread beyond the directly affected category.

The second study explored the attitudes of young people living in the same territory.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 142 students (68 male, 74 female; $M_{\text{age}} = 18.23$) from two high schools in this area: one ($n = 61$) specializing in humanities, the other in vocational education ($n = 81$). A previous study (Cariota Ferrara et al., 2001) has found, in the former, a prevalence of students coming from families of professionals, and in the latter a large prevalence of students coming from families of local traders.⁴ This led to the assumption that the vocational secondary school students were the most involved in competition with the Chinese because of their parents' economic activities.

Procedure and Measures

Procedure and measures were the same as in Study 1.

Results

Reliability of the scales was satisfactory, for both the blatant (Chinese, $\alpha = .87$; Moroccans, $\alpha = .85$; Poles, $\alpha = .84$) and subtle prejudice (Chinese, $\alpha = .71$; Moroccans, $\alpha = .69$; Poles, $\alpha = .73$). The scores of the respective items for both blatant and subtle prejudice were averaged to obtain a single measure to be used in the following analyses. The higher the score, the higher the prejudice.

We ran an ANOVA with two within-participants factors (Target: Chinese vs. Moroccans vs. Poles; Type of Prejudice: Subtle vs. Blatant) and one between-participants factor (Category: Humanities vs. Vocational Education). The effect of the factor type of prejudice was significant, $F(1, 140) = 438.91, p < .001, \eta^2 = .758$. As in the first study, the mean scores of blatant prejudice were lower than those of subtle prejudice (Table 2). The interaction Target \times Type of Prejudice was also significant, $F(2, 139) = 8.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$, confirming the presence of different patterns of prejudice, depending on the prejudice dimension (blatant vs. subtle). At the level of blatant prejudice, the main effect of target was significant, $F(2, 139) = 13.41, p < .0001, \eta^2 = .162$. Pairwise comparisons showed that the BP mean score toward the Chinese group was significantly higher than the BP mean score toward Moroccans ($p < .001$) and Poles ($p < .001$), while the difference between the last two groups was not significant ($p > .3$). Therefore, even students showed

TABLE 2
Students' blatant and subtle prejudice toward immigrant groups

Target	School	Blatant prejudice		Subtle prejudice	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Chinese	Humanities	2.01	0.78	3.25	0.64
	Vocational education	2.98	0.99	3.55	0.66
	Total	2.56	1.02	3.42	0.67
Poles	Humanities	2.01	0.79	2.91	0.72
	Vocational education	2.49	0.91	3.14	0.73
	Total	2.28	0.89	3.04	0.73
Moroccans	Humanities	2.00	0.79	3.18	0.65
	Vocational education	2.58	0.93	3.40	0.66
	Total	2.33	0.92	3.31	0.66

Note. The table reports means and standard deviations for blatant and subtle prejudice. Scores range from 1 to 5.

higher blatant discrimination against the Chinese group. At the subtle prejudice level, the main effect of target was significant, $F(2, 139) = 29.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = .299$. The mean relative to the Chinese was higher than that relative to Moroccans ($p < .001$) and Poles ($p < .001$), and the mean for Poles was lower than that for Moroccans ($p < .001$). Hence, in the case of students, results showed a higher discrimination of Chinese immigrants at the subtle level of prejudice as well.

In addition, in the case of the student sample, we found a significant interaction Category \times Target \times Type of Prejudice, $F(2, 139) = 7.03, p = .001, \eta^2 = .092$. At the blatant prejudice level, the main effect of category was significant, $F(1, 140) = 23.94, p = .001, \eta^2 = .146$: The BP mean scores of the humanities students were always lower than those of vocational students. The interaction Target \times Category was also significant, $F(2, 139) = 12.98, p < .001, \eta^2 = .157$. We found no significant differences between the BP means of the three target groups for the humanities students ($ps > .8$), while for vocational students, the BP mean of the Chinese was higher than those of Poles ($p < .001$) and Moroccans ($p < .001$), and the BP means of the last two groups were not significantly different from each other.

At the subtle prejudice level, the main effect of category was significant, $F(1, 140) = 6.38, p = .013, \eta^2 = .044$. The means of the humanities students were lower than those of vocational students. The interaction Target \times Category was not significant ($F < 1$), so the difference between the SP scores of the two groups of students did not depend on the target group.

Discussion

The results of the second study seem to confirm the important role that intergroup competition plays in fostering prejudice and its expression. In the case of students, in fact, at the blatant level, only participants assumed to perceive higher competition (vocational students) showed higher scores of blatant prejudice toward the Chinese group. But, unlike the adults, students also expressed more subtle prejudice toward the Chinese than the other two groups. This result is quite surprising and might be due to the fact that the conflict with Chinese immigrants is an issue

workers had to deal with in their adulthood, while students were socialized in a context in which this conflict already played an important role, thus also affecting the deeper dimension of their attitude toward the outgroup. The intergroup competition adults personally experienced with the Chinese could justify the expression of their prejudice (cf. Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) which, in turn, could raise, for young people, the psychological salience of the Chinese outgroup, fostering negative attitudes even on the subtle dimension (for an analysis of the role of psychological salience of social groups in the socialization of stereotypes and prejudices, see Bigler & Liben, 2006). Therefore, it might be inferred that long-lasting material competition, which becomes a salient component of the social context, can have negative effects on the first generation's attitudes, and even worse effects on the next generation, which has been socialized in a climate of hatred and hostility.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Social psychology studies prejudice as an intergroup process in which factors like social categorization, negative interdependence, and relative deprivation have a decisive role (Brown, 1995). Importantly, intergroup competition for material reasons has been shown to have a negative effect on intergroup attitudes (Esses et al., 2001; Sherif, 1967), and scholars have underlined its relevance in terms of practical implications and public policy (Moghaddam, 2008). In addition, recent literature stresses the importance of exploring the interactions between intergroup competition, cooperation, superordinate identity, and the perception of similarity (Brewer, 2000; Riketta & Sacramento, 2008). Consequently, the theoretical framework in which social psychology investigates intergroup competition is gradually becoming more complex.

So far, however, there has been a lack of studies on the effect of intergroup competition on prejudice accounting for the multidimensional approach to prejudice. Our research, exploring blatant and subtle prejudice toward groups, varying in the perceived competition with the in-group, could offer some useful ideas about the relation between intergroup competition and subtle/blatant prejudice. The present research can be seen as a first exploration of a complex field that needs investigation.

To sum up our results, it seems that, in the specific context in which we carried out our study, economic competition encourages the blatant expression of negative attitudes toward the Chinese group, which is the most discriminated against. In particular, in the adult sample, intergroup competition seems to affect the blatant form of prejudice, while subtle prejudice appears mostly related to dynamics of integration and cultural differences. Interestingly, the economic conflict seems to affect younger people's attitude toward the outgroup more deeply. Further research could fruitfully explore the relations between intergroup competition, psychological salience of the outgroup, and the different forms of prejudice in a theoretical perspective that accounts for development and socialization (Bigler & Liben, 2006).

From a methodological point of view, this study is in favor of the distinction between subtle and blatant prejudice. Without that distinction, we would lose an important explanatory instrument regarding intergroup relationships, as our results show.

In conclusion, it is relevant to underline that, even though many scholars have tried to determine the relative importance of resource-related and identity-related factors in fostering inter-

group conflict, when looking at real groups living in the same territory, it may be very difficult to say which of them are more important, since they become interdependent (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Certainly, we have to consider how intergroup competition for concrete reasons could worsen intergroup relations, creating a history of social distance and hostility which may become an intrusive heritage for young people. Hence, from a practical point of view, policy makers should consider both social identification and realistic competition to promote more positive intergroup relations.

NOTES

1. Our study was carried out in San Giuseppe Vesuviano and Ottaviano. All participants were residents of these municipalities.
2. We choose not to draw more specific predictions for the subtle dimension, because of lack of previous findings in the literature.
3. All post-hoc comparisons in the current study are based on the Least Significant Difference procedure.
4. In the present research, all vocational students' parents were involved (as entrepreneurs or subcontractors) in textile/clothing business, while all humanities students' parents were not. Participants who did not comply with these conditions ($n = 7$) were removed from analyses.

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