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Are Value Priorities Predictors Of Prejudice? A Study With Italian Adolescents

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Abstract

This study explored value priorities, prejudice toward the Africans, and the relationships between these dimensions in 233 Italian adolescents. Measures: *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (Capanna et al., 2005), to assess value priorities, and *Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale* (Manganelli Rattazzi & Volpato, 2001) to distinguish subjects in: *Equalitarians*, *Bigots*, and *Subtles*. Results: 1) adolescents scored higher in self-transcendence and openness to change than conservation and self-enhancement; 2) the 51,5% of adolescents were classified as *Equalitarians*, the 41,6% as *Subtles*, and the 6,9% as *Bigots*; 3) *Equalitarians* scored higher than the others in self-transcendence, while *Bigots* and *Subtles* scored higher in self-enhancement than *Equalitarians*; 4) self-transcendence negatively affected prejudice, conservation and self-enhancement were predictors of prejudice. Differences for sex and age emerged.

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1. Introduction

Values are defined as desirable objectives that provide guiding principles in people's life and constitute socially accepted representations of basic motivations (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). According to the Schwartz's Values Universal Theory (1992), values are hierarchically structured elements in relation to their importance and each individual is characterized by a personal ordered system of value priorities that influences his/her behaviors and attitudes. Schwartz distinguished ten basic values, organized in four areas: 1) self-transcendence is constituted by *benevolence*, referred to the attention to protect and enhance the well-being of people with whom one has close relationship or frequent personal contact, and *universalism*, linked to the tolerance and protection of the welfare of

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the others and the nature; 2) conservation is composed by *security*, related to the attention to safety, harmony, stability of society, relations, and Self, *tradition*, referred to the importance attributed to respecting the traditional customs or religious ideas, and *conformity*, linked to the respect and submission to social expectations or norms; 3) openness to change is constituted by *self-direction*, referred to the independence of thought and action, and creativity, *stimulation*, that expresses the interest to do exciting activities, search novelty and change in life, and *hedonism*, that is the pleasure and gratification for oneself; 4) self-enhancement is formed by *achievement*, related to the research of personal success and demonstration of competence according to social standards, and *power*, that is the desire to obtain social prestige and control resources and people. Differences for sex were noted in relation to value priorities, in the sense that women evaluated self-transcendence as a more important area than men, while men attributed more importance to self-enhancement and openness to change than women (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). Moreover, research demonstrated that conservation increases with age, while stimulation, hedonism, and achievement decrease (Schwartz, 2005). In consideration of the role that value priorities play on attitudes and behaviors (see Schwartz, 2006), some studies analyzed the relationship between values and ethnic attitudes. For example, Sagiv and Schwartz (1995) pointed out that readiness for social contact with outgroup correlated positively with universalism and self-direction and negatively with tradition, security, and conformity. More recently, Feather and McKee (2008) underlined significant and positive relationships both between self-enhancement (particularly, power) and conservation (especially, security) and levels of ethnic prejudice; furthermore, they noted negative relationships between self-transcendence (benevolence and universalism) and levels of ethnic prejudice. In the framework of a consolidate tradition of research (Sears & Kinder, 1971; McConahay, 1983; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Coenders et al., 2001), prejudice was analyzed distinguishing a hidden form of prejudice from an explicit form of discrimination. According to Pettigrew and Meertens' perspective (1995), prejudice could be expressed both in latent and declared forms, named, respectively, subtle prejudice (Sp) and blatant prejudice (Bp). The first one is characterized by a covert expression of outgroup discrimination, careful to maintain a positive social image of themselves and it is composed by the *Defence of traditional values*, related to the belief that ingroup values were more important than those of outgroup, the *Exaggeration of cultural differences*, consisting of the overstatement of cultural and religious diversities, and the *Denial of positive emotions*, linked to the suppression of positive feelings toward outgroup. The second one is referred to the explicit refusal of members belonging to other ethnic groups and is constituted by the *Threat and rejection*, that is the perception of outgroup as a great danger for ingroup, and the *Anti-intimacy*, corresponding to the rejection of sexual contact or intermarriage with people belonging to other ethnic groups. By means of the aforementioned perspective, it is possible to classify the subjects, in relation to levels of Sp and Bp, in three typologies: *Equalitarians*, with low mean values of both Sp and Bp; *Bigots*, with high mean values of both Sp and Bp; and *Subtles*, with high mean values of Sp and low mean values of Bp. Significant differences for sex and age were noted in relation to subtle and blatant ethnic prejudice. In reference to Italian adolescents, Manganelli Rattazzi and Volpato (2001) pointed out that girls showed lower levels of Sp and Bp toward immigrants than boys and Falanga, De Caroli, and Sagone (in press) noted that boys expressed higher levels on the *Denial of positive emotions* toward the Africans than girls. Furthermore, White et al. (2009) showed that university students reported significantly lower levels of Sp and BP than adolescents and De Caroli, Falanga, and Sagone (2012) pointed out that young adults reached lower levels of *Defence of traditional values* and *Threat and rejection* than adolescents.

2. Methodology

The aim of this research was to explore value priorities, subtle and blatant prejudice toward the Africans, and the relationships between these dimensions in Italian adolescents. In detail, we expected that: H₁) *Equalitarians* would display higher levels in self-transcendence and openness to change than *Bigots* and *Subtles*; H₂) *Subtles* and *Bigots* would express higher levels in conservation and self-enhancement than *Equalitarians*; H₃) the higher the adolescents would score in self-transcendence and openness to change, the lower they would score in levels of subtle and blatant prejudice toward the Africans; H₄) the higher the adolescents would score in conservation and self-enhancement, the higher they would score in levels of subtle and blatant prejudice toward the Africans. Differences for sex and age will be analyzed.

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 233 Italian adolescents, 90 boys and 143 girls, aged between 13 and 19 ($M_{age}=16,45$, $sd=1,76$), attending three Public Secondary Schools in Catania, Sicily (Italy), and divided in two age-groups by means of the median value: Gr-1 ($n=118$) aged between 13 and 16 ($M_{age}=14,91$, $sd=,96$) and Gr-2 ($n=115$) aged between 17 and 19 ($M_{age}=18,03$, $sd=,64$).

2.2. Measures and procedure

Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, 1992; Capanna, Vecchione & Schwartz, 2005), useful to assess the importance attributed to the human values, is composed by 40 short verbal portraits, evaluated in a 6-point Likert scale (from 1=not like me at all to 6=very much like me), describing 40 different person's goals, aspirations, or needs that implicitly indicate the importance of a value. Portraits are employed to assess: benevolence (e.g., It's very important to him/her to help the people around him/her. He/she wants to care for their well-being), universalism (e.g., He/she thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. He/she believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life), self-direction (e.g., It is important to him/her to make him/her own decisions about what he/she does. He/she likes to be free and to plan and choice his/her activities), stimulation (e.g., He/she likes surprises and is always looking for new things to do), hedonism (e.g., It is important to him/her to do things that give him/her pleasure), achievement (e.g., It's important to him/her to show him/her abilities. He/she wants people to admire what he/she does), power (e.g., It is important to him/her to be in charge and tell others what to do), security (e.g., It is important to him/her to live in secure surroundings. He/she avoids anything that might threaten his/her safety), conformity (e.g., He/she wants to avoid doing anything people would say to be wrong), and tradition (e.g., He/she tries hard to do what his/her religion requires). Internal consistency was resulted to be satisfactory for Cronbach's alpha range between .76 and .83.

Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), adapted for Italian context by Manganeli Rattazzi and Volpato (2001) and applied by Falanga, De Caroli and Sagone (in press) with African people as target category, is constituted by 20 items, each valuable on a 6-point Likert scale, and divided in two subscales: Sp subscale ($\alpha=.68$), structured in the *Defence of traditional values* (e.g., The Africans living here teach their children values and skills different from those required to be successful in Italy), the *Exaggeration of cultural differences* (e.g., How different or similar do you think African people living here are to Italian people like yourself in their religious beliefs and practices?), and the *Denial of positive emotions* (e.g., How often have you felt sympathy for African people living here?, item reverse); Bp subscale ($\alpha=.76$), structured in the *Threat and rejection* (e.g., Most politicians in Italy care too much about African people and not enough about the average Italian persons) and the *Anti-intimacy* (e.g., I would not mind if an African person who had a similar economic background as mine joined my close family by marriage).

2.3. Data analysis

The examination of the statistical significance of results was carried out using the SPSS 15.0 software (Statistical Package for Social Science), by means of the following tests: t-Student, One-Way ANOVA, and linear regression with stepwise method. Age and sex were used as independent variables, values priorities and subtle and blatant prejudices (with their components) were employed as dependent variables. Levels of subtle and blatant ethnic prejudice were rated by adding the scores obtained in the items constituting respectively the two subscales; levels of prejudice for each of the five components were computed by summing responses to the relative items and dividing them for the number of items. High scores indicated high levels of ethnic prejudice. Using theoretical mid-point (equal to 35), adolescents were divided in the three following typologies: *Equalitarians*, with levels of subtle and blatant prejudice <35; *Bigots*, with levels of subtle and blatant prejudice >35; *Subtles*, with levels of subtle prejudice >35 and of blatant prejudice <35

3. Results

3.1. Value priorities

Adolescents scored higher in self-transcendence ($M=4,67, sd=,74$) and openness to change ($M=4,46, sd=,74$) than in conservation ($M=3,94, sd=,71$) and self-enhancement ($M=3,67, sd=,97$) ($F_{(3,230)}=87,99, p<.001$). In detail, adolescents attributed more relevance to universalism ($M=4,74, sd=,80$), self-direction ($M=4,70, sd=,73$), benevolence ($M=4,59, sd=,84$), stimulation ($M=4,39, sd=1,04$), achievement ($M=4,36, sd=,98$), hedonism ($M=4,27, sd=1,07$), conformity ($M=4,11, sd=,93$), and security ($M=4,11, sd=,83$) than to tradition ($M=3,59, sd=,91$) and power ($M=2,98, sd=1,18$) ($F_{(9,224)}=91,15, p<.001$). Statistically significant effects for sex were found (Table 1a-1b): girls scored higher in self-transcendence than boys ($t_{(231)}=-4,25, p<.001$), particularly in benevolence ($t_{(231)}=-4,06, p<.001$) and universalism ($t_{(231)}=-3,51, p=.001$), in conservation ($t_{(231)}=-2,44, p=.01$), especially in tradition ($t_{(231)}=-2,13, p=.03$) and conformity ($t_{(231)}=-2,32, p=.02$), and in self-direction ($t_{(231)}=-2,31, p=.02$), while boys scored higher than girls in self-enhancement ($t_{(231)}=3,63, p<.001$), specifically in power ($t_{(231)}=3,98, p<.001$) and achievement ($t_{(231)}=2,35, p=.02$). No differences for sex in the other values were found.

Table 1a. Value priorities: differences for sex.

Subjects	Self-transcendence		Conservation		Self-enhancement	
	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>
Sex	4,42	,75	3,80	,75	3,90	,91
Boys	4,82	,68	4,03	,67	3,49	,96
Girls						

Table 1b. Value priorities: differences for sex.

Subjects	Benevolence		Universalism		Tradition		Conformity		Self-direction		Power		Achievement	
	<i>M</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>
Boys	4,32	,86	4,52	,76	3,43	,83	3,94	1,03	4,57	,76	3,36	1,16	4,54	,91
Girls	4,76	,78	4,88	,79	3,69	,95	4,22	,84	4,79	,71	2,74	1,14	4,24	1,01

Differences for age-groups emerged in relation to self-transcendence: older adolescents evaluated this area as more important than younger ones (Gr-1: $M=4,53, sd=,75$; Gr-2: $M=4,81, sd=,70$; $t_{(231)}=-2,92, p=.004$). In detail, older adolescents attributed a greater importance to benevolence (Gr-1: $M=4,46, sd=,86$; Gr-2: $M=4,73, sd=,80$; $t_{(231)}=-2,72, p=.007$) and universalism (Gr-1: $M=4,60, sd=,78$; Gr-2: $M=4,88, sd=,79$; $t_{(231)}=-2,52, p=.01$) than younger ones. Moreover, older adolescents valued as more important conformity than younger ones (Gr-1: $M=3,98, sd=1,03$; Gr-2: $M=4,25, sd=,79$; $t_{(231)}=-2,25, p=.02$).

3.2. Levels of subtle and blatant prejudice

Adolescents obtained higher levels of Sp ($M=34,99, sd=6,43$) than Bp toward the Africans ($M=21,88, sd=7,08$) ($t_{(232)}=37,85, p<.001$), without differences for age. In detail, adolescents scored higher in the *Exaggeration of cultural differences* ($M=4,12, sd=,76$) than the *Denial of positive emotions* ($M=3,33, sd=1,07$) and the *Defence of traditional values* ($M=2,96, sd=,92$) ($F_{(2,231)}=128,99, p<.001$) and they showed higher levels on the *Threat and rejection* ($M=2,27, sd=,74$) than the *Anti-intimacy* ($M=2,06, sd=,74$) ($t_{(233)}=3,90, p<.001$). In reference to sex, boys expressed higher levels than girls on Sp (boys: $M=36,44, sd=5,89$; girls: $M=34,08, sd=6,60$) ($t_{(231)}=2,78, p=.006$) and Bp toward the Africans (boys: $M=23,91, sd=7,65$; girls: $M=20,61, sd=6,41$) ($t_{(231)}=3,55, p<.001$); in detail, boys obtained higher scores than girls in the *Defence of traditional values* (boys: $M=3,23, sd=,87$; girls: $M=2,79, sd=,91$) ($t_{(231)}=3,69, p<.001$), the *Threat and rejection* (boys: $M=2,51, sd=,77$; girls: $M=2,13, sd=,69$) ($t_{(231)}=3,90, p<.001$), and the *Anti-intimacy* (boys: $M=2,22, sd=,95$; girls: $M=1,95, sd=,89$) ($t_{(231)}=2,08, p=.04$).

In relation to the typologies of subjects, the 51,5% of adolescents ($n=120$) were classified as *Equalitarians*, the 41,6% ($n=97$) as *Subtles*, and the 6,9% ($n=16$) as *Bigots*. Significant differences emerged in reference to value priorities, in the sense that *Equalitarians* attributed more importance to self-transcendence ($F_{(2,230)}=8,427, p<.001$),

specifically to benevolence ($F_{(2,230)}=6,041, p=.003$) and universalism ($F_{(2,230)}=7,70, p=.001$), compared to *Subtles* and *Bigots*. Furthermore, *Bigots* evaluated self-enhancement ($F_{(2,230)}=4,950, p=.008$) and, especially power, ($F_{(2,230)}=7,480, p=.004$) as more important than *Subtles* and *Equalitarians* (Table 2a-Table2b). No significant differences in relation to the other value priorities among the three typologies of subjects emerged.

Table 2a. Value priorities: differences for typology of subjects

Subjects	Self-transcendence		Self-enhancement	
	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>
Equalitarians	4,85	,69	3,49	,90
Subtles	4,49	,73	3,80	,96
Bigots	4,34	,83	4,16	1,22

Table 2b. Value priorities: differences for typology of subjects

Subjects	Benevolence		Universalism		Power	
	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>sd</i>
Equalitarians	4,77	,77	4,93	,78	2,77	1,09
Subtles	4,41	,88	4,58	,75	3,12	1,18
Bigots	4,34	,83	4,33	,90	3,69	1,52

3.3. Linear regressions between value priorities and subtle and blatant prejudice: general data

Analysis of linear regressions displayed that self-transcendence ($\beta=-.431, t=-6,62, p<.001$), conservation ($\beta=.331, t=5,16, p<.001$), and self-enhancement ($\beta=.164, t=2,77, p=.006$) influenced Sp toward the Africans ($R=.479; R^2=.219$). In detail, universalism ($\beta=-.279, t=-3,67, p<.001$) and benevolence ($\beta=-.214, t=-2,87, p=.004$) negatively affected Sp, while security ($\beta=.208, t=2,95, p=.004$), hedonism ($\beta=.164, t=2,79, p=.006$), and conformity ($\beta=.193, t=2,77, p=.006$) positively affected Sp toward the Africans ($R=.491; R^2=.224$). Similarly, self-transcendence ($\beta=-.508, t=-8,06, p<.001$), conservation ($\beta=.309, t=4,98, p<.001$), and self-enhancement ($\beta=.165, t=2,89, p=.004$) influenced Bp ($R=.529; R^2=.270$). Specifically, universalism ($\beta=-.394, t=-5,40, p<.001$) and benevolence ($\beta=-.143, t=-1,98, p=.05$) negatively affected Bp, while security ($\beta=.131, t=2,01, p=.04$), tradition ($\beta=.259, t=3,97, p<.001$), and power ($\beta=.235, t=3,73, p<.001$) positively affected Bp toward the Africans ($R=.553; R^2=.291$).

4. Discussion and conclusion

Findings of this investigation pointed out that adolescents considered self-transcendence and openness to change as more important values than conservation and self-enhancement. Moreover, according to previous research carried out by Schwartz and Rubel (2005), girls attributed more importance to the protection and enhancement of well-being of the others and the nature, the respect of traditional customs, religious ideas, and social norms, and to independence of thought and action than boys. Additionally, boys considered as more important the achievement of success, social prestige, and power than girls. Furthermore, older adolescents attributed a greater importance to the well-being of other people than younger ones. Concerning the ethnic prejudice, in line with the previous evidences reported by Manganelli Rattazzi and Volpato (2001) and, more recently, by Falanga and her colleagues (in press), results underlined that boys expressed higher levels than girls both on Sp and Bp. Additionally, the majority of adolescents were classified as *Equalitarians*, that is, with low levels of *Subtle* and *Blatant* prejudice and, in partial confirmation of H₁ and H₂, results showed that *Equalitarians* attributed more importance than *Subtles* and *Bigots* to self-transcendence and *Bigots* and *Subtles* evaluated Self-enhancement, especially, power, as more important value than *Equalitarians*. In relation to H₃, results showed that only self-transcendence negatively affected Sp and Bp. It means that the more the students attributed importance to protect and enhance the well-being of people and to preserve the nature, the less they expressed covert and explicit form of discrimination toward the Africans. The H₄ was confirmed: self-enhancement and conservation affected both Sp and Bp. It means that the more the adolescents considered important safety, harmony, and respect to the traditions, and attributed importance to achieving success and prestige and to controlling resources and people, the more they showed high levels both on hidden and declared forms of prejudice toward the Africans. In light of these results, priority values seem to play a significant role on the

expression of covert and explicit forms of discrimination toward the Africans. Future research, carried out with other target outgroup, and with younger subjects, could deepen the role of values on prejudicial attitudes toward other ethnic groups in developmental age. Equations and formulae should be typed in Mathtype, and numbered consecutively with Arabic numerals in parentheses on the right hand side of the page (if referred to explicitly in the text). They should also be separated from the surrounding text by one space.

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