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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: H<sub>1</sub>) *Equalitarians* would display higher levels in self-transcendence and openness to change than *Bigots* and *Subtles*; H<sub>2</sub>) *Subtles* and *Bigots* would express higher levels in conservation and self-enhancement than *Equalitarians*; H<sub>3</sub>) 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; H<sub>4</sub>) 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.

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