The role of identity development on latent and manifest prejudice: the perception of immigrants in Italian university context

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Abstract

Each identity is a particular story, developed through perceptions, feelings, thoughts and symbolic interactions. The study examines the predictor variables to the latent and manifest prejudice, and relationship between identity development and prejudice. The research involves 187 Italian college students. They completed: Ego Identity Process Questionnaire, Latent Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale. As hypothesized, there is a different identity development due to the age variable, and a variant level of prejudice related to the gender; the results show, confirming the hypothesis, the presence of a correlation between ideological domains such as religion and politics and the level of manifest prejudice.

Keywords: Identity development; Manifest Prejudice; Latent Prejudice.

1. Introduction

The integrated and coherent set of different images and the representations that each person has of himself/herself constitute the feeling and perception of identity, in its dual aspect of personal and social identity (Salmeri, 2001).

Our common membership of the human race is being put seriously into question when innumerable divisions are categorized into a classification system, boasted as the best or dominant, because it selects and categorizes people on the basis of religion, culture, nation, considering each of these factors as the only valid criterion for that particular context.

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The other one, especially if different or foreign (Salmeri, 2013) is represented in terms of a total alterity and/or as a subject/object to absorb, neutralize, and thus to normalize for the sake of a supposed superiority. In an intercultural perspective, however, humans are different: subjects cannot be distinguished only by religion, nation and culture, but also according to social class, gender, profession, language, morality, ideas policies, and science. The Belonging to the "human race" cannot delete the multiple identities that characterize; identity is neither a good nor a bad thing, but it can be good or bad depending on how we interpret it.

2. Identity, relationship and education

In order to recognize the identity of the foreigner and facilitate the processes of inclusion is essential to avoid the institutional stickiness, which makes integration a purely formal act. Things should be done together with the other one rather than towards the other one, focusing on a logic of decentralization and divergent thinking. Identity is not understood in a single effort because even when an important finding about themselves is done, it is still possible to bring out unknown aspects. Each person belongs to multiple social groups and interacts with them, this fact shows the diversity of the identity of each individual. Our choices are made within particular constraints dictated by the culture, mentality and even prejudices.

In this context, Pettigrew and Meertens (1995, 2001) carried out a cross-national study in seven independent national samples from western Europe, and measured “subtle” prejudice and “blatant” prejudice. Subtle prejudice was considered as a hidden form of prejudice, providing a positive public image and useful to build a self-representation suitable for the principles of socially accepted tolerance; blatant prejudice corresponded to an attitude rejection toward minority groups, not explicitly influenced by social desirability (De Caroli, Falanga, and Sagone, 2012).

Biologically we present a few differences, whilst in terms of the individual narrative we are unique, because we are unique stories, which are defined in a complex relationship. Each identity is a particular story, developed continuously, through perceptions, feelings, thoughts, as well as through speeches, symbolic interactions and memory. The memory is fundamental and foundational principle for the use of posterity, and it acts as an antidote to the cancellation of its existence, as there is a link between the memory passed on from generation to generation, and the personal and collective identity (Salmeri, 2012).

Even the stranger, therefore, has feelings and expresses values, which must be recognized, heard and deciphered in genuine respect of the actual educational needs.

The education and the recognition of Otherness (foreign or different) are to be considered for democratic pedagogy an exercise of orthodoxy, which materializes in a coherent and organic practices, which becomes real heresy and transgression of common and established ways of thinking and understanding the difference (Genovese, 2000). By Don Milani we learned that you need to make way for last people and do not make way through them, because, according to the paradigm of paradox, it takes refine educational process as well as it takes to lie to tell the truth (Balducci, 1995).

Teaching and learning are functional to build a shared and meaningful knowledge. Life gets inside the school and a lot of other educational agencies, since nothing is gained for ever: the need for research, the need for change and the anxiety of adaptation are therefore constituent parts of education. Convergent thinking is a typical characteristic of the logic, whereas divergent thinking involves the breaking of the fixity and fosters creativity (Bruner, 1968).

Mind is collectivist and not isolationist, thus consolidating knowledge through routes and itineraries of relationship and not through individual elements out of context. Any attempt to stigmatize, and/or categorize Otherness is therefore not only anti-democratic, but it is also anti-pedagogical.

We are condemned to live in a society of strangers, men without qualities, if freedom and solidarity continue to be contradictory and unknown terms. According to Illich (1985), the social division of labor and solidarity are incompatible principles. Questions about human needs focus on human obligations, because in the process of
recognition of Otherness the respect for human rights and the promotion of the dignity of each person are fundamental. We identify, therefore, our common humanity in our difference, our individuality and our history, faithfully observing, in mutual recognition, our particular culture based on reciprocity and obligations. There is not a distinct, recognizable and codified identity in our universal nature of men, but only in concrete reality of different subjects.

Being humans, therefore, is a conquest that democratic pedagogy, prophetically, wants to carry out in the “here and now”. The new” paideia” promotes and urges change, because when the subject is being placed in an ante rem (of the stereotype or stigma) loses his/her dynamism and is being deprived of his/her identity and development, transforming in a stable reality or, perhaps, stabilized. The static identity as hypertrophy of identity is the negation of the past and the deprivation of any projection towards the future.

No man is an island in itself, with no doors or windows, as he is also a hyper-ordered structure in its being complex (Salmeri, 2003).

3. Identity development and level of prejudice

Prejudice and institutional racism are common factors influencing the personal identities of both those who have benefited from White privilege. One’s identity has a major influence on how they perceive others, their self-esteem, self-confidence, aspirations, motivation, and effort expended in various aspects of their life (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, and Seay, 1999). When schools don’t aggressively try to facilitate positive identities by all their students, including their racial identity, there are consequences (Pellerone, 2012).

Racial identity is an important part of one’s overall identity. According to Ponterotto (2006), the White racial identity development process involves coming to terms with one’s own unearned privilege in society.

In 1995, Janet Helms developed six stages of White racial identity development: contact: the individual adheres to the “colorblind”; disintegration: the person has new experiences which confront his prior conception of the world and because this conception is now challenged by this new information or experience; reintegration: characterized by a “blame-the-victim” attitude; pseudo-independence: the first stage of positive racial identification; immersion/emersion: individual makes a attempt to connect to his/her own White identity and to be anti-racist; autonomy: characterized by clear understanding of and positive connection to their White racial identity.

Heeson (2010) shows relation between identity and white racial identity development, in particular, according to the White Racial Identity Development Models, adolescents who are crossing identity diffusion status are characterized by no social consciousness, disintegration, pre-exposure, and conformity; according to the White Racial Typology Model, adolescents in diffusion status manifest racial justice, that is conflictive and reactive type.

Adolescents with achieved identity, according to the White Racial Identity Development Models, are characterized by internalization, autonomy, redefinition and integration, and integrative awareness.

Adolescents who are crossing foreclosure identity status, according to the White Racial Identity Development Models, manifest resistance, re-integration and pseudo-independence, conflict and antiracism, dissonance and resistance; according to the White Racial Typology Model, they are domimative.

Identity Moratorium, according to the White Racial Identity Development Models, is characterized by acceptance redefinition, immersion and emersion, retreat into white culture, and introspection; according to the White Racial Typology Model, this status presents racial acceptance, that is domimative and integrative type.

4. Materials and Method

Aims of this study are: a) to analyze the predictor variables to the latent and manifest prejudice (according to the Pettigrew and Meertens’ model); b) to examine relationship between prejudice and identity development, measured through the Marcia’s Model (1989), which classifies identity in four profiles: Achievement (the individual makes an identity choice after investigating the possible alternatives through experimentation); Moratorium (characterized by
tension and exploration on the different alternatives); Foreclosure (the individual clines uncritically to the first identificatory models without experimenting with alternative ones); Diffusion (typical of those who effect superficial experimentations, without reflections).

We assume that, according to literature (Pellerone, 2013), older students exhibit a greater identity development compared to younger students.

It is assumed that, as regards the level of the prejudice, there is a significant difference owing to gender and age variables, and in particular it is assumed that girls present, lower level of prejudice, both subtle and manifest, than those ones expressed by males, as confirmed by national literature (Manganelli Rattazzi and Volpato, 2001; Volpato and Manganelli Rattazzi, 2000); and that older students express a positive outgroup representation than younger ones (De Caroli, Falanga, and Sagone, 2012).

Investigating the studies in the literature that identify a correlation between interpersonal dimension and prejudice (Pettigrew and Meertens, 1995; Visbal, 2009), it is hypothesized the presence of correlation between domains of family, friendships and capacity to enter into sentimental relationships with low level of manifest and subtle prejudice; and the presence of correlation between ideological domains that is religion, occupation and politic with the level of prejudice.

Furthermore, confirming the literature (Pettigrew et al., 1998) psychological factors of prejudice are assumed to operate in a similar way and regardless of the target groups, that is the groups towards which greater level of prejudice is perceived.

The aim is also to investigate the predictor variables of prejudice, hypothesizing, as confirmation of the literature, that among the predictors of the level of manifest and latent prejudice we find the following: I) level of identity exploration and commitment; II) importance attached to interpersonal and ideological domains; III) type of racial group who is facing the prejudice.

The research involved a group constituted by 148 Italian university students, i.e. 32 males (17.1%) and 155 females (82.9%) aged between 18 and 23 (M=19.88; S.D=1.25); with reference to the varying faculty, the participants were subsequently divided into: a) a group constituted by 133 subjects (72.1%) who are attending the Faculty of Psychology; b) a second group formed by 54 students (28.9%) who are attending the Faculty of Primary Education Science.

With reference to the varying age, participants were subsequently divided into: a) a group of 103 subjects (55.1%) aged between 18 and 19 (M=18.99; S.D=0.99), i.e. 75, who are attending the Faculty of Psychology and 28 the Faculty of Primary Education Science; b) a group of 84 students (44.9%), i.e. 58 who are attending the Faculty of Psychology and 26 the Faculty of Primary Education Science, aged between 20 e 23 years (M=20.98; S.D=1.14).

The instruments administered to both groups of students are: Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) and Latent Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale.

**Ego Identity Process Questionnaire** is a tool by Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel and Geisinger (1995), serving to investigate identity status development according to Marcia’s Model. It is a scale constituted by 32 items, that investigates the dimensions of exploration and commitment as distinctive elements. The Exploration level is measured through the analysis of four ideological domains: occupation, religion, politics and values; the Commitment level is investigated through four interpersonal domains: family, friendships, gender roles and capacity to enter into sentimental relationships. Balistreri and collaborators report the estimates of internal validity of the tool: .80 for the results that indicate commitment, and .86 for the scores that indicate exploration; the scores that indicate reliability are 0.90 for commitment and 0.76 for exploration; the internal consistency is 0.72 and 0.71 respectively for commitment and exploration.

**Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale** by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) in the Italian version by Arcuri and Boca (renamed Latent and Manifest Prejudice Scale, 1996). It is constituted by 20 items, divided in two subscales, that is 10 items to explore the subtle prejudice, divided in: defence of traditional values, exaggeration of cultural differences and denial of positive emotions; 10 items to analyze the blatant prejudice, structured in threat and rejection and anti-intimacy. Pettigrew and Meertens’ scales classify individuals into three different categories: fanatics: subjects with high scores on both scales tend to discriminate against the out-group in a manifest and subtle way; egalitarian (or Democrats): who has a low propensity to discriminate in a subtle way should also show a low propensity towards open forms of prejudice; thin: individuals who do not openly express prejudice against the out-group, are ready to manifest it if they have a socially acceptable way at their disposal.
5. Data Analysis

The Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA, one way) is used to measure the influence of age on identity development; the Manova, design of type 2 (Gender) X 2 (Age: 18-19 vs. 20-23 years), is done to verify the influence of the independent variables on level of prejudice. The Pearson’s correlation is used to assess the relation between identity development and level of prejudice. To verify the absence of influence of the target group on the level of latent and manifest prejudice is done the univariate analysis of variance. In order to explore the predictive variants of prejudice, Analyses of Hierarchical Regression for Separate Blocks is used.

6. Preliminary analysis: the immigrant groups

In reference to the first open question "When you think about non-EU immigrants, what is the first ethnic or racial group that coming to your mind?", that is groups towards which they express a greater prejudice: the largest group indicated is that of moroccans (40.1%), followed by blacks men (33.2%) and romanians (7.5%).

The three categories of immigrants identified by Pettigrew and Meertens’s scales are: fanatics, egalitarian and thin: the frequency distribution shows that 26.7% manifests high level of latent and manifest prejudice (fanatics); 26.7% have an high latent prejudice but a low manifest prejudice (thin) and only 23% are egalitarian subjects, with a low level of prejudice.

All subjects showed higher levels of subtle (M = 33.30, S.D = 6.69) than blatant prejudice (M = 29.07, S.D = 6.68) (t(186)=59.50, p<.001), and this result was a confirmation of theoretical assumption indicated in Pettigrew and Meertens’ model (1995).

7. Results

The study examines the predictor variables to the latent and manifest prejudice, and relationship between identity development and prejudice.

From the analysis of the frequency distribution on the basis of identity development, the following emerges: 34.8% of the students are going through the achievement identity status, followed by 28.3% with a diffusion status and 20.9% with a foreclosure status.

ANOVA underlines a main effect linked to the age variable on identity development (F (1, 186) = 7.87; p < 0.01). The breakdown of the univariate effects shows that group a (younger students) manifests lower level of identity development than group b (older students): in particular older students (M = 12.05, S.D = 3.50) give greater importance to the work than older students (M = 10.92 S.D = 2.61). The first research hypothesis is confirmed, according to the literature (Pellerone, 2013).

A factorial multivariate variance, of type 2 (Gender) X 2 (Age: 18-19 vs. 20-23 years), was done to verify the influence of the independent variables on level of prejudice; data analysis underlines a main effect linked to the gender variable (F(1,186)=14.22; p < 0.001), and no effect due to age; the breakdown of the univariate effects shows that boys obtain significantly higher values than girls in the manifest prejudice (Males: M = 33.33, S.D = 1.26; Females: M = 27.21; S.D =.51). These results confirm partially the second research hypothesis.

In reference to the third research hypothesis, concerning the presence of correlation between prejudice and identity development, the Pearson’s correlation shows how the level of manifest prejudice is positively correlated to the stereotype of gender (r = 0.19, p < 0.01), and negatively to the work (r = - 0.16, p <0.05), and the level of latent prejudice is positively correlated with the ideological dominance of religion (r = 0.16, p < 0.05) and negatively with
personal values (r = -0.23, p < 0.01) and interpersonal relationship (r = -0.17, p < 0.05). These results confirm the research hypothesis.

Another objective is to verify the absence of influence of the target group (i.e. the group towards which students perceives a greater prejudice) on the level of latent and manifest prejudice. The univariate analysis of variance shows us the main effect of the “ethnic group” factor both on latent prejudice (F = 2.33, p < 0.05), and manifest prejudice (F = 2.81, p < 0.01); particularly the highest level of manifest prejudice is expressed towards Albanians (M = 31.40; S.D = 2.19) and black men (M = 30.77, SD = 6.26); the greatest latent prejudice is expressed towards the Romanians (M = 38.50; S.D = 8.22) and black men (M = 30.32; S.D = 4.62). These results refute the fourth research hypotheses.

Finally, we wanted to investigate the predictor variables of prejudice, hypothesizing, that among the predictors we find the following the identity development (identity commitment and exploration), the importance attached to values, religion, family and relationship. The analysis of Hierarchical Regression with separate blocks shows that level of exploration and commitment has no significant effect, but ideological and interpersonal domain (second block) have significant effect on manifest and latent prejudice. Particularly, predictors of the level of manifest prejudice are: work (β = -.56, p < 0.01), religion (β = -.26, p < 0.01), politics (β = -.41, p < 0.01), personal values (β = -.38, p < 0.01), friendship (β = .31, p < 0.01), gender stereotype (β = .41, p < 0.01), which account for 44.9% of the general variance.

Predictors of level of latent prejudice are the following: work (β = -.26, p < 0.05), personal values (β = -.51, p < 0.01), interpersonal relationship (β = -.25, p < 0.05), accounting for 41.4% of the variance. These results confirm the research hypothesis.

8. Discussion

According to Pettigrew and Meertens’s theory, based on the distinction between forms of latent and manifest prejudice, participants are divided into three groups: fanatics (26.7%), thin (26.7%) and egalitarian (23%). The group most frequently mentioned is the Moroccans one, followed by the black men and Romanians one.

Different levels of prejudice have been detected in relation to the target group, in fact Sicilian students show the highest level of manifest prejudice against the Albanians and black men, and the highest level of latent prejudice towards Romanians and black men.

In reference to the identity development, most of the students are classified in achievement, and this variable is influenced by age: in fact, confirming the hypothesis of the research, older students have a greater identity development than younger students. As regards the level of preconception, data show that boys have a greater prejudice than girls, confirming the hypothesis of research.

The correlation between prejudice and identity development shows that: students with an high level of manifest prejudice attach little importance to the work and, above all, they have a strong gender stereotype, therefore they are prone to discriminate people by gender and breed; students with an high level of latent prejudice are strongly influenced by their religion, but they attach little importance to values and quality of interpersonal relationships.

Finally, manifest prejudice is anticipated by little importance attached to the work, religion, politics, personal values and strong attention to gender stereotype. The latent prejudice is also foretold by little emphasis on work, personal values and, in addition, interpersonal relationships. These data confirm the research hypothesis.

9. Conclusion

Our world feeds mainly on simulations, and often reality is a copy of other simulations, not existing as original element. The reason is transformed into meta-logic structure, which promotes and encourages the rationalization of the irrational to induce the compulsive consumption of any product, useful or not, dangerous or less (Ritzer, 2000). The rationalization of consumption produces illusion (Bauman, 2011).
The inhabitants of the world of "welfare" are consumers of goods and services, but the weakest, foreigners and different are cut out and placed on the margins. The excluded are thus deprived of freedom and choice. Acting, however, is choosing and choice is characteristic of the human being (Berlin, 2005). The most serious crime is the exploitation of man by man, which produces dehumanization. The man becomes a man among men and grows in the relationship, for which the construction of intercultural education is in the processes of participation and dialogue.

References


