

## *Special Issue: Prejudice: Sociodevelopmental perspectives*

### Introduction. Intergroup prejudice from a developmental and social approach

Ileana Enesco<sup>1</sup>, and Silvia Guerrero<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain)

<sup>2</sup> Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (Spain)

**Título:** Introducción. El prejuicio intergrupal desde una perspectiva evolutiva y social.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este Tema Monográfico ha sido reunir investigaciones de psicólogos evolutivos y sociales, españoles y extranjeros, en el amplio ámbito del prejuicio y las relaciones intergrupales. Se incluyen trabajos de revisión y estudios empíricos con distintos presupuestos teóricos, procedimientos de investigación y tipo de poblaciones. La mayoría de las contribuciones abordan el estudio de las actitudes de niños, adolescentes y jóvenes hacia la diversidad étnico-racial, el sesgo endogrupal o la identidad étnica, y tres artículos tratan otras formas de prejuicio intergrupal de innegable importancia social en nuestra cultura occidental: los prejuicios hacia la homosexualidad, la discapacidad y la gordura.

**Palabras clave:** Prejuicio; actitudes; niños; adolescentes; enfoque evolutivo; psicología social.

**Abstract:** The aim of this *Special Issue* is to gather research from developmental and social psychologists, from Spain and other countries, in the broad area of prejudice and intergroup attitudes. The Monograph includes review papers and empirical studies that present different theoretical assumptions, research procedures, and types of population. Most contributions are related to the study of children's and youth's attitudes toward different racial-ethnic groups, ingroup bias or ethnic identity, and three articles address other forms of prejudice that have an undeniable social significance in our Western societies: biases toward homosexuality, disability, and body size.

**Key words:** Prejudice; attitudes; children; adolescents; developmental approach; social psychology.

Intergroup prejudice seems inherent to human societies and is no less acute today than it has been throughout history. Despite great material and democratic progress in Western societies, discrimination and social exclusion of the migratory masses from "beyond the frontiers" of the comfortable Western world are practiced extensively in the more advanced countries. Even worse, some values concerning justice, allegedly consolidated in our European Community, are at risk of foundering due to fear—or political opportunism that incites it—being invaded by outsiders. As J. I. Torreblanca writes in his article on "The xenophobe abyss" which Europe may be heading towards (El País, May 13, 2011): "It only took a few more than 20,000 Tunisians to question one of the greatest achievements of European integration: the abolition of border controls between Member States, set by the Schengen Agreement of 1985." And he reminds us that, whereas in 1995, the European Community accepted more than 600,000 refugees from the war in Yugoslavia, today Europe trembles when faced by a few young men from North Africa.

Poverty, color, religion, or culture are, however, only some of the reasons that may lead to discrimination, exclusion, and intolerance. In fact, prejudice may be aimed at almost any social group that is attributed some kind of *atypicality* (physical, intellectual, moral, cultural, etc.), compared to a reference group. Thus, in addition to the ethnic, racial or national prejudices, other groups such as women, gays, fat people, people with disabilities, the elderly,

can be the target of prejudice and discrimination in diverse societies. And this occurs regardless of whether or not they are numerical majority groups (e.g., gender prejudice is aimed at a group—women or men—which is about half the population; the anti-black prejudice in South African history came from a numerically small minority), and it is also relatively independent of the objective characteristics of the group that is the target of prejudice. In this sense, to oversimplify, *atypicality* can be represented along a continuum of objectivity-subjectivity. At one extreme, the characteristics that make an atypical group are objective and measurable (e.g., skin color, weight or body size, physical or intellectual disability, etc.); at the other end, the features are *perceived* but are, in fact, neither observable nor assessable; they are just traits attributed to members of a group by virtue of belonging to it (e.g., gay men are less rational than heterosexuals, fat people are nice but not very smart). Of course, prejudice is often based on a complex network of objective and subjective features, but its core aspect is indeed the attribution.

Throughout the twentieth century, the phenomenon of prejudice has continued to raise many questions among social scientists, many of which remain without a final answer in this new century. Where do prejudices come from? How do they originate in society and in the individual? Can we completely eliminate them or will there always be a need to distinguish between *us* and *them*? And if so, what role does the need for differentiation play? The multidimensional nature of prejudice makes it very difficult to find answers that take into account all these aspects and determinants. Prejudice *exists* in different forms at different levels: in individuals' minds, in the community surrounding them, and in the broader society in which they live, the

**Dirección para correspondencia [Correspondence address]:** Silvia Guerrero. Facultad de Educación. Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha. Avda. Carlos III s/n (Fabrica de Armas) 45004. Toledo (Spain).  
E-mail: [silvia.guerrero@uclm.es](mailto:silvia.guerrero@uclm.es)

values of which are determined by its history. Prejudice adopts different aspects and contents, depending on the group to which we belong or with which we identify. There is no single direction in which prejudices move and influence individuals, an idea that was predominant over many decades from a simplistic perspective of socialization, but is now abandoned. Thus, although the influence of parents on their children's beliefs and values are important, there is no simple direct relationship between parents' and children's prejudices. The peer group in pre-adolescence, for example, may have a greater impact than the parents themselves, and may mediate the increase or reduction of prejudice during adolescence. In addition to children's unique experiences and their developmental stage, their own individual characteristics (personality, emotional stability in relationships, degree of resilience, cognitive flexibility, etc.) also influence how they process social information, more or less critically and reflectively.

Despite all the still pending answers, the advances in the study of prejudice, its origins, and the factors that modulate it have been remarkable. On the one hand, the number of empirical studies on intergroup prejudice in diverse countries and continents has increased exponentially in the last 40 years, gathering a vast amount of data that allow transnational and cross-cultural contrast of different theories about the origin and determinants of prejudice. On the other hand, interest in studying the origin of prejudice has united developmental psychologists and social psychologists in this endeavor, enriching the theoretical propositions and research procedures from a genuinely interdisciplinary perspective (as an example, see the recent monographs dedicated to the study of intergroup prejudice in the *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 2005, 26[6]; *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 2007, 31[5]; *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2010, 40[4]).

The aim of this *Special Issue* is to gather research from developmental and social psychologists, from Spain and other countries, in this broad area of prejudice and intergroup attitudes. Most contributions are related to the study of child and adolescent attitudes toward racial-ethnic groups different from one's own group, ingroup bias or ethnic identity, and one of the articles addresses the issue of prejudice in young people and adults from the perspective of infra-humanization. As we shall see, the results obtained in other countries with a long multicultural tradition (USA, UK, The Netherlands, and Australia) do not always coincide with what is found in Spain, which makes it especially interesting for the reader to reflect about the origin of these differences and the possible future course of ethnic prejudice in countries that, like Spain, still have little experience in multicultural integration. Without going into profound sociological debates, it is worth briefly presenting some socio-historical features of our country, and offering foreign readers a general reference of Spanish reality, that may help them to interpret some of the results of the work presented by national authors in this issue.

In a little over a decade, Spain went from being a country dominated by a dictatorial political regime (1939-1975), without any economic appeal for foreigners other than tourism, to becoming a democracy (1977) with a thriving future prospect. During the 1980s, economic and social progress began to arouse the interest of the international community in Spain. The access of Spain to the European Economic Community (1986) further contributed to breaking down the barriers that separated Spain from Europe and the rest of the world. These changes made Spain an attractive target for immigration from less developed countries with serious economic difficulties (in the beginning, especially Latin America and North Africa) and, in a few years, the ethnic composition of the Spanish population changed substantially. The low percentage of foreigners still counted in 1981 (approximately 0.5% of the population) was multiplied by 5 at the end of the 1990s, and by 22 in 2008, one of the highest immigration rates in the world between 2000 and 2008 (from 2.3% to approximately 11.4%, excluding the population not recorded in the census, INE, 2011). This led to major changes in the social structure of the country, and the phenomenon of immigration became one of the problems that concerned Spanish society. Today, after a rapid increase in the immigration rate until the years 2007-08, the percentage of registered foreigners remains around 12.2% (INE, 2011).

The need to consider the reality of immigration and its impact on Spanish society led to the development of works, mainly sociological, which began studying Spaniards' attitudes towards the phenomenon of immigration (among these early studies, see Aguilera Arilla, Gonzalez Yanci, & Rodriguez, 1993, and Calvo Buezas, 1989; see also Díez Nicolás & Ramírez Lafita, 2001). In 1994, the Spanish Permanent Immigration Observatory was created, a governmental agency the main functions of which are to collect data, analyze and disseminate information related to migratory movements in Spain. There are also many organizations, mainly NGOs, which regularly publish data obtained from surveys on Spaniards' attitudes toward and perceptions of the diverse immigrant groups. Therefore, there is a large body of descriptive data collected in recent decades on these issues. However, there are still few empirical studies conducted in Spain from the perspective of social psychology and even fewer from developmental psychology. Hence, the interest in collecting contributions in this *Special Issue* by Spanish authors<sup>2</sup> currently working in this field of research.

Given the social significance of other types of prejudice in our Western societies, we invited other groups of researchers working in three different areas to participate in this monograph: prejudice against homosexuality, prejudice

<sup>2</sup> In this *Special Issue* we have focused mainly on prejudice in children and adolescents. However, it is important to note that in Spain, there are several research teams who are investigating prejudice in adults, whose works are excellent contributions to this field.

related to people's physical aspect—in other words, the anti-fat prejudice—, and prejudice towards disabilities. As we shall see in these works, certain characteristics of prejudice and intergroup attitudes are common to different types of prejudice whereas others are specific to each particular field.

The Special Issue is organized as follows. The first four papers represent different, but not irreconcilable, approaches to the study of prejudice in children and adolescents. The following seven papers are empirical studies on ethnic and racial prejudice with different theoretical assumptions, research procedures, types of populations (majorities and minorities from different countries) and ages studied (kindergartners, school children, adolescents, and adults). They are presented in ascending developmental order, starting with studies of kindergartners and going on to studies of adolescents and youths. Lastly, we collected three empirical studies that have addressed other forms of intergroup prejudice.

\*\*\*

For decades, social-developmental research has focused on the assessment of prejudice, stereotypes, and intergroup attitudes in children, adolescents, and adults. Besides these aspects, which may (or may not) determine people's behavior, an issue that is gaining increasing importance in recent research is: how do people *judge* situations of discrimination or social exclusion? Are there situations where it is considered acceptable to exclude *others* because they belong to a particular social group? And if so, what kinds of arguments are used to accept or sanction social discrimination?

The first article, by Aline Hitti, Kelly Lynn Mulvey, and Melanie Killen, presents a careful review of developmental studies on this issue, many of which are works led by Killen, whose research in this area is internationally known (see her recent book, Killen & Rutland, 2011). As the authors note, various contexts of group interaction may prescribe different rules about inclusion or exclusion and, therefore, lead to different decisions about who can and who cannot participate in a social group. For example, in sports, sexual segregation is more often the norm than the exception, whereas ethnic segregation in sports is exceptional, and the reasons for these current social practices are different for each decision. Normally, women do not compete with men on sports teams due to their physique (strength, etc.) and this justifies social segregation or gender exclusion, whereas there are no similar reasons to exclude a black person from a football team because of *being black*. If this occurs, we refer to racism. In one case, we apply reasoning based on group organization (it would not be efficient for men and women to compete in a sport of strength, for example), in another case, we reason in terms of justice and equality (it would be unfair to exclude someone from an activity which they can play effectively, whatever their skin color). How do children and adolescents judge exclusion on the basis of gender,

ethnicity, race, or culture? The authors address these and other interesting issues from the perspective of the Social Domain Theory (Turiel, 1982), which posits that, in children's thinking, different forms of reasoning (moral, social-conventional, and personal) coexist, the relative priority of which depends on many variables, including the child's age, type of social situation, and its complexity (for example, when required to coordinate the needs of various people, but resources are scarce), group characteristics, or the context in which inclusion or exclusion occur. In some conditions, children can give priority to a conventional over a moral argument to justify social exclusion, while in others, the reverse may occur, depending partly on the aforementioned factors. The article is an excellent update of the studies in this broad and complex field of research.

Drew Nesdale's work provides a different perspective on the study of prejudice and intergroup attitudes in children. Based on the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Nesdale has made a new theoretical proposal that includes the developmental dimension (Social Identity Developmental Theory, SIDT) to explain various aspects of the development of prejudice. In this article, he reviews several of his investigations (some still unpublished) of the influence of the peer group in children's prejudices. To what extent do group norms affect the degree to which children develop prejudice toward an outgroup? How do the rules of the broader community affect those of one's own peer group, moderating or exacerbating the emergence of prejudices? In line with various empirical results he comments on— some apparently paradoxical—, Nesdale attempts to identify variables that moderate negative intergroup attitudes and changes in these attitudes that occur with age. Among other things, Nesdale stresses the idea that children's motivation to belong to social groups and be accepted in them has an important influence on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the group as a whole.

Patricia G. Kalyn Ramsey and Kalyn Mika adopt a different methodological approach to that of most studies on prejudice and ethnic identity, but one that is certainly necessary to fully understand the experiences of people living "between two cultures." These authors present an analysis of cases of transracial adoption, based on in-depth interviews with five young Koreans adopted by *white* American parents at an early age. Among many other questions, they are asked to think about how life would have been if they had remained with their biological parents or if they had been reared by adoptive parents of their same ethnicity. As the authors note, in Western societies—and Spain is no exception—, increasingly more parents adopt children of a different racial-ethnic group from their own group, and this can involve both losses and benefits for the adopted child. On the one hand, these children not only lose their biological parents but also the opportunity to develop within their culture of origin among physically similar people and, therefore, without the risk of feeling *different from others*. Logically, this situation is all the more relevant the more

homogeneous—ethnically speaking (i.e., with no people of their own ethnic origin)—the community in which they will live. On the other hand, these children have access to another culture that usually offers better material and social-emotional conditions for their good future development. There is therefore a clear need to study the way these children construct different aspects of ethnic and personal identity. In this article, the authors describe, case by case, with numerous references to the interviews themselves, the difficulties faced by these young Korean girls to build their identity and, at the same time, the important differences among them in the way they *navigate* between their culture of origin and their adopted culture. These differences are not only due to the socialization patterns of their adoptive parents but also arise from the conjunction of many variables, from the personal characteristics of each girl and the vicissitudes of their development, to the particularities of the school and the broader community where they have spent their childhood and adolescence.

Another recent approach in the study of prejudice is the one presented in the article by Eva E. Chen, Kathleen H. Corriveau, and Paul L. Harris. In recent years, Harris has developed ingenious experimental procedures to assess children's sensitivity to consensus, that is, the extent to which they take into account the *opinion of the majority* when they have to choose between two conflicting options. The authors start by reviewing previous studies of this group and of other research groups, which indicate that, at least since age 4, when children have to choose between a view shared by several people and one single person's different opinion, they tend to rely more in the former. Among the studies discussed, they focus particularly on those that have compared majorities and minorities (in number) belonging to different ethnic-racial groups. For example, what happens when the "majority" is a racial group other than one's own and the "minority" is an ingroup member? (e.g., three Asians compared to a European, for European children, or vice versa for Asian children). Overall, it appears that preschool children still rely on the majority, regardless of their ethnic group. However, the authors present another study with more subtle experimental conditions in which children seem to be more sensitive to ethnic group membership, so that the tendency to follow the opinion of the majority disappears. The authors discuss why children may end up granting more credibility to an individual of their own group than to a majority from the outgroup. This interesting line of research is certainly promising for future studies of prejudice in various areas, both at early and advanced ages, as it allows the indirect but robust evaluation of bias towards different social groups.

Many authors have spent years stressing the need for longitudinal studies to cast some light on aspects of the development of prejudice that remain unclear (Bigler & Liben, 2006; Doyle & Aboud, 1995; Katz 1987; Nesdale, 2002; Ramsey, 1991). However, the vast majority of research is based on cross-sectional studies, so we have very little

information on intraindividual changes in this area of development. In the work of Ileana Enesco, Silvia Guerrero, María Oliva Lago, and Purificación Rodríguez, a longitudinal study with Spanish children, aged 4 to 6 years, is presented, which sought to answer the following questions: Does preference and favoritism for one's own group precede the rejection of outgroups, as indicated by the cross-sectional studies? Do children maintain the same affective orientation toward different outgroups? This latter issue has received little research attention because longitudinal designs are needed to answer it. In order to assess whether children display a specific orientation (positive or negative) towards one outgroup over another, in this study, a multigroup comparison context (i.e., children were presented with figures of four different ethnic groups, including Spanish) was used. The results of this study clearly confirm the developmental precedence of ingroup favoritism over the rejection of outgroups, but also suggests a remarkable stability, from one year to another, of children's affective orientation toward different ethnic groups.

Another problem that continues to inspire debate among authors is the extent to which the development of attitudes and prejudice is related to children's cognitive development, as proposed by the Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Aboud (1988). Although several studies have tested this hypothesis in school children (and several of the articles in this Special Issue discuss the scope and limitations of this theory), very few have done so with preschool children, a stage at which the first ethnic attitudes are supposed to emerge. This was one of the objectives of Silvia Guerrero, Ileana Enesco, and Virginia Lam's study with Spanish children, aged 3 to 5 years, in this case using a cross-sectional design and in a dichotomous comparison setting (figures of Black and White children). The findings are very significant. In some socio-cognitive tasks, children aged 3 to 4 appear to be "blind" to the figure's skin color; however, in the socio-emotional tasks, they do not act randomly but display preference for the white figures and show a moderate rejection of the black figures. This result seems to contradict the previous study just mentioned, and the discussion of the article attempts to explain why, in this case, some rejection of the outgroup emerged. On the other hand, it is confirmed that children's cognitive level, not their age, is significantly related to their attitudes toward the in- and outgroup, which seems to support the cognitive-developmental theory.

Virginia Lam and Moodley Denzel test the predictions of the Nesdale's (SIDT, 1999) theory, using the minimal group experimental paradigm with children between 5 and 10 years old. Although there have been several studies with children based on this paradigm, virtually none have done so with children from an ethnic minority in a predominantly white society. The authors present a study with British children of Bengali origin who were "invited" to participate in a "team picture." As usual in this type of paradigm, the situation is defined as a competition between two teams and diverse

questions and choices are posed to assess the children's preference for the ingroup versus the outgroup, and so on. In this study, the conditions under which "one's own team" was formed by members of the participant's ethnicity (Bengali) or by members of another ethnic group (White British) were combined. An interesting finding was that the children preferred the members of their own team over the opposing team, regardless of their ethnic group. As noted by the authors, it is uncommon in "real life," for children of different ethnic groups to join forces to compete against their own ethnic ingroup, as seems to occur in this study. Therefore, the authors discuss the relevance of these findings to design intervention programs based on reclassification strategies (e.g., grouping children of different ethnicities into the same team or sports), which could promote the integration of children of different ethnicities.

In the study just discussed, the children *believed* they were participating in a drawing contest and they appraised the members of the team as if they were real. This type of situation can become even more realistic if the children have the opportunity to really interact with each other (or think they are doing so), and this is the procedure used by Carolina Callejas, Irene Solbes, Cristina Dopico, and Ana Escudero in their study with children aged 7 and 12 years. The aim was to analyze the way children behave during an online game when they had to make decisions about other players' behavior, such as what penalties are imposed for committing a foul. The authors designed a computer program that simulates a Chat exchange quite realistically and the subsequent development of a game among four children: the participant and three other players (a Spaniard, a Moroccan, and a Latin American). The instruction that participants received was that a new online game to play with children from other schools was being tested. This ingenious procedure allowed not only maintaining high motivation throughout the task, but also indirectly assessing the children's ethnic attitudes; that is, they were not aware of the real objective of the study. In research on prejudice, this is a central aspect, because many authors argue that the apparent decline with age of negative attitudes toward the outgroup may be due to children's growing awareness of what is socially acceptable (e.g., Rutland, Cameron, Milne, & McGeorge, 2005), rather than to a real reduction of prejudice. In this sense, besides the interest of the results of this work, pointing to ingroup favoritism rather than to negativity towards outgroups, it is an undeniable contribution to the developmental study of prejudice in contexts that are meaningful to children and, at the same time, not so "transparent" in its purpose.

Maykel Thijs and Jochem Verkuyten present a study of intergroup attitudes among native Dutch pre-adolescents and pre-adolescents of Turkish origin who are in the same classroom. On the one hand, they study the evaluations of the ingroup and the outgroup by peers of the same and of different ethnicity; on the other hand, they analyze the relationship between in- and outgroup bias and the

multicultural climate of the classroom. Among the most interesting results, two are outstanding. On the one hand, it is confirmed that ethnic group membership serves as normative reference group that provides information on how to assess one's own group members and those of another group. In other words, children in the same classroom influence each other in their in- and outgroup evaluations, and ingroup evaluation is particularly influenced by the companions of their own ethnic group, and by the normative context of the school. Moreover, the multicultural climate of the classroom seems to have different effects in each group. Thus, whereas the ingroup bias of the native Dutch preadolescents was negatively affected by the multicultural climate, among the preadolescents of Turkish origin, it had positive effects. The authors note that these results point in the same direction as those obtained in previous studies in Holland, confirming that Dutch multiculturalism in the classroom promotes the ethnic identity of minorities but it may have a less positive effect on the children's majority group.

The findings of Thijs and Verkuyten are particularly relevant for education and invite us to reflect on what is occurring in Spain, where the integration of ethnic minorities at school has become one of the most complex issues of the Spanish educational reality. The article by Irene Solbes, Carolina Callejas, Purificación Rodríguez, and Oliva Lago addresses one aspect of this problem. The authors studied the attitudes of Spanish children aged 6 to 12 toward potential classmates from two ethnic-racial groups (White and Black). Its main goal was to determine the extent to which ethnic contact in the classroom promotes the reduction of intergroup prejudice, as confirmed in numerous studies (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011), who tested Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact Hypothesis. For this purpose, they assessed the attitudes of two groups of children attending Spanish schools of different ethnic composition: classrooms with high ethnic heterogeneity and homogeneous classrooms. Their results showed high ethnic prejudice in the entire sample, but it was higher among children attending ethnically heterogeneous schools and classrooms. That is, the prejudice against potential Black partners was higher among children in heterogeneous schools than in the schools that were highly homogeneous. The authors discuss the reasons for which daily contact with children from ethnic minorities may promote prejudice and negative attitudes in the majority group, and suggest the need to reflect on this reality in our country and the conditions in which education of minorities is occurring in the classroom.

There are certainly many facets of prejudice that have not been addressed in previous articles, for instance, the emotional side. The article by Armando Rodríguez, Naira Delgado, Verónica Betancor, Jacques Philippe Leyens, and Jeroen Vaes addresses this essential dimension of prejudice in the context of the theory of infrahumanization. According to this theory, a subtle aspect of prejudice involves the

degree to which we humanize the “other,” attributing them genuinely human characteristics (i.e., secondary emotions such as nostalgia, pride, and guilt) or, conversely, we *infrahumanize* them by conferring them characteristics we share with other animals (e.g., primary emotions such as surprise, tension, restlessness). Based on previous work showing that we do not humanize all groups equally, in this article, the authors present an empirical study with young Spanish university students to contrast some hypotheses derived from the theory of self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987). According to this theory, the authors predict that the closer, friendlier, and better known an outgroup, the more likely it is to be attributed a genuinely human nature (in this case, secondary emotions). They also predict the independence of the humanization of an outgroup and its status, that is, a high-status outgroup could be considered less genuinely human than a lower status outgroup. The findings are in line with what was predicted and, in their interesting discussion, the authors wonder about the variables that modulate the tendency to humanize or infrahumanize groups and the diverse roles played by knowledge, information about the outgroup, and perceived similarity.

As mentioned initially, this Special Issue includes work on prejudice towards other social groups or individuals' characteristics. Homosexuality, disability or fatness are doubtless very different issues but it is clear that, in our society and throughout history (in the first two cases), they have attracted discrimination, social exclusion, and aversion. The stereotypes associated with each of these groups may be very different, but the result is that they suffer discrimination of a more or less subtle form.

Within the framework of the Social Domain Theory, Stacey Horn and Justin Heinze developed an interesting study on American teenagers' beliefs about homosexuality. The first author has performed several studies on this subject with very interesting results that are discussed in the introduction to the article. In this paper, they present an extensive empirical study of the ideas that youngsters aged 14 to 18 hold over the origin of homosexuality, their judgments about sexual orientation (to what extent is it *acceptable* or *inacceptable*), how young homosexuals (gay and lesbian) are treated in our society, and their satisfaction or displeasure concerning the possibility of interacting with homosexual peers. Their results show that beliefs about the origins of homosexuality (e.g., socialization patterns, personal choice, or biological disposition) are closely related to the way they judge homosexuals and their rationale (moral or conventional) to justify or reject the exclusion or contemptuous treatment of this group. In addition to these differences in their reasoning, young people's prior beliefs are also related to their disposition or disgust at the prospect of interacting with homosexuals. The results and final discussion show the need to adopt a broad perspective about the study of prejudice (not just towards homosexuality) that integrates the diverse aspects that make

up people's beliefs, their interrelationship with the way outgroups are judged, and their potential influence on behavior.

The work of S. B. Palmer and Adam Rutland focuses on children's attitudes toward individuals' weight and body size. The article begins with an extensive review of previous studies in this field and of the diverse theories that have been proposed to explain developmental changes in the course of prejudice. One of the notable features of anti-fat prejudice is that its developmental course is usually different from that seen in other areas, particularly in ethnic prejudice. Thus, while the latter tends to decrease with age, following a predictable pattern according to Aboud's (1988) cognitive-developmental theory (although there is a long debate about the meaning and the factors responsible for this decline; see Enesco, Guerrero, Callejas, & Solbes, 2008), anti-fat prejudice seems to be much more resistant to attenuation with age. In line with these differences, Palmer and Rutland contrast the empirical findings of previous research with current theories of prejudice. Their empirical study is carried out with English children, aged 5 to 11 years, through measures of preferences and allocation of positive and negative traits to three body types: overweight children, average weight children, and extremely thin children. Their results are quite clear: in general, both boys and girls prefer the figures of underweight children (they choose them as friends, playmates, or “guests” to their homes), but the girls express more pro-thin and anti-fat bias. However, as the authors note, although the preference for images of *extremely unhealthy bodies* is more pronounced in girls, data from previous studies indicate that boys are approaching this idealization of extreme thinness. In Spain, recent studies on this subject show similarly alarming trends among children (Solbes & Enesco, 2010).

In the last article, Lindsay Cameron, Adam Rutland, Rhiannon Turner, Rosie Holman-Nicholas, and Claire Powell present an investigation with English children, aged 5 to 10 years, about their attitudes toward disabled peers. The novelty of this work is that they test the hypothesis that an “imaginary” contact, not a real one (i.e., the mental simulation of an interaction with a member of a group different from one's own) can have positive effects on intergroup attitudes. Previous studies with adults have found that this form of imaginary contact can improve attitudes towards diverse types of outgroup (homosexuals, ethnic minorities despised by the majority, etc.). The results of this study confirm the effectiveness of this strategy with children from 5 to 6 years old but not older than 7 years. The authors explain these findings in relation to the previous experience of children with disabled peers, and discuss the scope and limitations of “imaginary contact” as an intervention technique for reducing prejudice.

Inevitably, many other aspects of prejudice and intergroup conflict have been left out of this Special Issue. Articles aimed at developing educational proposals to reduce prejudice and social conflicts or —positively formulated—

to promote cooperation, justice, and equality from childhood were not included. Education is undoubtedly one of the most sensitive and difficult areas to cultivate because it is not limited to a mere translation of research into the classroom, nor can it rely on intuition, good will, or "common sense". To seriously address the issues raised in this Special Issue from an educational perspective would require another

full volume. We herewith invite experts in education for equality, tolerance, and prejudice reduction to join their efforts in such a project.

**Acknowledgements.-** We thank the Editors of the journal *Anales de Psicología* for their invitation to participate as guest editors of this Special Issue.

## References

- About, F. E. (1988). *Children and prejudice*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Aguilera Arilla, J., González Yanci, P.P. & Rodríguez, V. (1993). Actitudes de la población española ante los inmigrantes extranjeros. *Estudios Geográficos*, Madrid, LIV, n° 210, enero-marzo, 145-154.
- Bigler, R. & Liben, L. (2006). A developmental intergroup theory of social stereotypes and prejudice. In R. V. Kail (Ed.), *Advances in child development and behavior* (Vol. 34, pp.39-89). San Diego: Elsevier.
- Calvo Buezas, T. (1989). Actitudes y prejuicios de los españoles ante los refugiados y ante los extranjeros. In *Movimientos humanos en el Mediterráneo Occidental* (pp. 259-270). Barcelona: Institut Català d'Estudis Mediterranis.
- Díez Nicolás, J. & Ramírez Lafita, M. J. (2001). *La inmigración en España. Una década de investigaciones*. Madrid: Imerso.
- Doyle, A. B., & About, F. E. (1995). A longitudinal study of white children's racial prejudice as a social-cognitive development. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 41, 209-228.
- Enesco, I., Guerrero, S., Callejas, C. & Solbes, I. (2008). Intergroup attitudes and social reasoning among majority and minority group children living in Spain. In S. Levy & M. Killen (Eds.) *Intergroup attitudes and relations in childhood through adulthood* (pp. 105-125). Nueva York: Oxford University Press.
- INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). Consulted 13 mayo, 2011. In <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/menu.do?type=pcaxis&path=/t20/e245/&file=inebase>
- Katz, Ph. (1987). Developmental and social processes in ethnic attitudes and self-identification. In J. Phinney & M.J. Rotheram (Eds.), *Children's ethnic socialization* (pp. 91-99). London: Sage
- Killén, M. & Rutland, A. (2011). Children and social exclusion. Morality, prejudice, and group identity. Sussex, R.U.: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Nesdale, D. (2002). Social Identity and ethnic prejudice in children. In D. Gabb, and T. Miletic, *Culture, race and community: Making it work in the new millennium*. Melbourne, Australia: Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit.
- Pettigrew, T., Tropp, L., Wagner, U. y Christ, O. (2011) Recent advances in intergroup contact theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.03.0001.
- Ramsey, P. G. (1991). The salience of race in young children growing up in an all-White community. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 28-34.
- Rutland, A., Cameron, L., Milne, A. y McGeorge, P. (2005). Social norms and self-presentation: Children's implicit and explicit intergroup attitudes. *Child Development*, 76, 451-466.
- Solbes, I. & Enesco, I. (2010). Explicit and implicit anti-fat attitudes in children and their relationships with their body images. *Obesity Facts*, 3, 23-32.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Turner, J.C., Hogg, M.A., Oakes, P.J., Reicher, S.D. & Wetherell, M.S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: a Self-categorization Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Turiel, E. (1982). *The development of social knowledge*. Cambridge University Press.

(Article received: 11-5-2011; reviewed: 6-6-2011; accepted: 7-7-2011)