Book review: Jeunes français et italiens face à l'immigration. Les deux facettes d'un même préjugé, by A. Bergamaschi (L'Harmattan, 2013)

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A. Bergamaschi
Jeunes français et italiens face à l'immigration. Les deux facettes d'un même préjugé

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Alessandro Bergamaschi's cross-national survey on teenagers' attitudes towards immigrants and minorities, recently published in France (Bergamaschi A., *Jeunes français et italiens face à l'immigration. Les deux facettes d'un même préjugé*, Paris: L'Harmattan - coll. Logiques Sociales, 2013, pp. 207, 22€), is able to provide a considerable and innovative contribution to the understanding of prejudice and its formation process. Furthermore, procedure and results of this study are in a position to question sociology of education on its core disciplinary objects – school both considered as an environment and as an educational establishment – and on some of its major debates, and namely on cultural pluralism *in* school and *through* school action.

Via a multivariate analysis of French and Italian teenagers perceptions, representations and attitudes towards immigrants and their descendants, Bergamaschi's work has the ambition to enlighten the socio-dynamic of prejudice formation, particularly focusing on the role played by contextual factors. Its outcomes convincingly demonstrate that prejudice-supporting representations and attitudes are strongly grafted into national political cultures, and they reflect to a great extent the way integration politics and public discourse have framed immigration and ethno-cultural pluralism at a national level.

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Bergamaschi's disciplinary anchorages are to be found in sociology of immigration and interethnic relations, being his main research interests focused on questions raised by immigration within the receiving society. Nevertheless, in his work he has frequently shown a special concern for youth and educational issues (Bergamaschi, 2010, 2011, 2013). Besides, it is an actual fact and a standpoint we defend in the present review, that interdisciplinary dialogue between sociology of immigration and interethnic relations, and sociology of education can be considerably fruitful for both branches.

Compared to the pre-existing plethora of literature on intergroup attitudes, and on ethno-cultural pluralism at school, the survey presents a few aspects of innovative and originality. Four seem to us particularly relevant: the interdisciplinary approach to prejudice, combining the social psychology *acquis* with a strongly sociological procedure; the cross-national approach taking into account two different national integration and cultural pluralism patterns; the choice of a multivariate analysis, as a methodological procedure able to ascertain the different role played by individual-level and contextual-level factors on the formation of prejudice; the population study, defined both by age rank – teenagers – and origins – majority population[1].

As a matter of facts, the study of intergroup attitudes has been mainly approached by social psychology (Sherif, 1966; Tajfel, 1981). Therefore, the most relevant hypothesis and theories on prejudice formation – namely, real conflicts theory (Sherif, 1966; Bobo, 1983, 1988), social identity theory (Tajfel, Turner 1986) and contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) – have been developed within the boundaries of this discipline and its procedures. Although providing a strong theoretical frame to the study of intergroup attitudes, the socio-psychological approach is unable to consider the wider context in which prejudice is actually originated and shaped: its main limit is hiding the fact that ethno-cultural difference has been historically framed under the prism of national discourses and imaginaries (Anderson, 1983). On the contrary, a sociological standpoint leads to situate prejudice within space and time, to grasp its historical, socio-political and structural dimensions. For this

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[1] The survey has been carried out in four cities: Marseille and Nice on the French field, Turin and Genoa on the Italian one. The sample has been composed by students attending the final two years of secondary school and having "national origins" for at least two generations. In the aggregate, 1200 teenagers have been interviewed.

purpose, the author makes two main starting assumptions: that ethno-cultural difference must be considered as a social construction (Lorcerie, 2007; Streiff-Fénart, 2009), and that the dynamic of prejudice formation cannot be explained outwards from the *«discursive opportunity structure»* (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004) in which it is legitimized to origin and spread. He considers, in other words, that for dissemination of racism and xenophobia to occur a primary condition is the rooting of prejudice in public discourse, through the action of political parties, opinion groups and mass media. Therefore, while the literature on intergroup attitudes is generally focused on the influence of individual-level factors, Bergamaschi's aim is to focus on contextual factors, so far relatively unexplored (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Rodriguez, Herrero, Ovejero & Torres, 2009).

Although cross-national approaches on intergroup attitudes have been suggested since their beginnings (Pettigrew, 1958) they had very little actual practice. The comparison put in place enables national-level contextual effects on prejudice to be appreciated, and to this aim, Italy and France as receiving immigration countries represent a relevant comparative case. Four main characterizing features can be listed here[2] distinguishing the way the two countries historically, politically and culturally shaped the issues raised by immigration: first, while the phenomenon is relatively recent in Italy – its public visibility started with the Albanian crisis in the early Nineties (Dal Lago, 1999) – it represents a structural component of France contemporary history (Noiriel, 1988; Schor 1996); second, the idea of Nation, closely intertwined with a strong and peculiar conception of secularism, has always played a central role in French history and political culture, unlike in Italy where the processes of nation-building and secularization took a weaker and less ideological character; third, while France has developed a national integration pattern, requesting newcomers to set aside any visible sign of cultural diversity to be accepted in public space, in Italy, rather than following a national model, integration has been largely determined by occasional local politics, in which religious and other non-governmental actors have played a considerable role; fourth, while Italian political actors and media have largely framed immigration as a security and labour market issue (Dal Lago, 1999; Sciortino and Colombo,

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[2] An extensive comparison of the two immigration receiving contexts, through a critical review of the Italian and French sociological literature on immigration and intergroup relations, is provided in chapter two.

2004), in France immigration is mainly described as a phenomenon that increases cultural and religious pluralism (Streiff-Fénart, 2009; Fassin, 2009).

In order to ascertain the value of contextual effects on prejudice, the survey is based on a multivariate analysis, taking into account three main independent variables – country of residence, individual factors (socioeconomic status, religious integration, type of school attended, gender), intergroup contacts situations – and two main dependent variables – social representations of immigrants and minority members, and attitudes towards them. More precisely, representations and attitudes are classed in two main kind of threats associated with immigration: realistic threats (competition between majority and minorities in job market or welfare, and criminality), and symbolic threats (concerning national identity, cultural and religious pluralism and its visibility in public space)[3].

The survey's study population[4] is composed by teenagers, aged between 16 and 18 years, and, among them, only the members of the "majority" group are taken into account. This choice, although involving a few risks associated to the ascription of ethnic identity, represents a double interest for the study objectives. Concerning the bracket of age, adolescence is the critical period in which intergroup attitudes (Erickson, 1968) and wider socio-political attitudes are developed (Muxel, 2001), attitudes that remain largely stable during adulthood (Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008). Furthermore, as a result of demographic trends, teenagers are currently the part of the population with the higher probability of being involved in group interactions between majority and minorities. Concerning the origins, the author seems aware of the fact that a clear dividing line between

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[3] Data concerning social representations have been collected through a technique of verbal association and examined via a frequency and rank analysis of the words associated by the respondents. Data concerning teenagers' attitudes towards immigrants have been collected through a questionnaire containing both scales already validated by other European surveys on the same subject (ESS 2002; ISSP 2003; EVS 2008) and new items specifically conceived for the present study purposes and assumptions. Methodological aspects and techniques are clearly detailed in chapter one of the book.

[4] In chapter three of the book, the author draws the sociological profile of the interviewees and compares the two national subsamples. Italian and French teenagers share several features, among which we notice a very temperate optimism towards the future, and an average low level of confidence towards other people and towards institutions. They show as well a few different, especially considering religious integration and intergroup contacts: both "direct" (friendship) and "indirect" contacts (leisure and consumption practices involving ethno-cultural "diversity") are more frequent among French than Italian teenagers.

"majority" and "minority" members among the teenage population is a construction, but considers nevertheless that such an origin-based definition permits to enlighten intergroup dynamics without ideological *a priori*. The choice is clearly innovative when compared to French research, traditionally suspicious to ethnic-based categories, but is also able to provide an original contribution to the already consistent Italian literature on interethnic relations at school , generally focusing more on school population as a whole (Besozzi, 1999; Besozzi & Colombo, 2012) than on native-born adolescents representations of immigrants (Agnoli, 2004).

The four aspects described above situate Bergamaschi's study in a position to provide a considerable contribution to the understanding of prejudice and its origins, despite the plethora of literature on the subject. Furthermore, the results of his analysis, that we are going to summarize below, challenge sociology of education by raising a few major questions on its objects and current debates.

The most striking outcome of the study is the evidence of the existence and the persistence of prejudice among the teenage students, on both sides of the Alps. Negative attitudes are widespread in both French and Italian samples, regardless to the greater or lesser historical implantation of immigration in the country and to the greater or lesser "official" degree of acceptance, equality and tolerance in the public discourse. Nevertheless, and that is the second impressive result of the study, prejudice towards immigrants and their descendants assumes a clearly different shape in the two countries: the national-level contextual factors are responsible to a great extent for shaping teenagers' representations and attitudes towards minorities.

The analysis of perceptions and social representations of immigrants, considered as the repository of meanings and knowledge in which teenagers' attitudes are formed, is reported in chapter four of the book. While Italian teenagers' social representations of immigrants are centered on the ideas of "threat to security" and "compassion" - drawing the image of a simultaneously dangerous and unfortunate category – the central core of French teenagers' representations consists in the idea of "precariousness", immediately followed by meanings associated to "cultural difference". The analysis of representations' anchorage displays to which extent they are grafted to the national integration and cultural pluralism patterns defining non-national minorities place within the society: as a matter of fact, teenagers' country of residence clearly stands out as the

only appreciable source of variation, regardless to their individual features and to their local contexts.

The analysis of teenagers attitudes, displayed in chapter five, reveals the nature of their fears towards immigration and members of ethnic minorities. Although negative attitudes are widespread in both under samples, their content is different. While Italian teenagers fears are oriented on the items associated to the realistic threats, French teenagers' concerns are more focused on symbolic issues. In Italian students' prejudice, immigrants and minorities' members represent a threat to their economic and social advantages as members of the "majority" group, and to security in general since they are perceived as responsible for increasing criminality. In French teenagers' prejudice, non-national minorities are responsible for increasing cultural and religious pluralism, therefore undermining those values, traditions and life-styles that define national identity: cultural impact of immigration is perceived as a threat rather than an improvement. Also, a few emblematic cases were questioned, like the wearing of headscarves in public spaces, an issue strongly debated in France (Bowen, 2008). Divergent view between French and Italian students can also be seen on the subject of granting national citizenship: while the first declare themselves reluctant to grant national citizenship to newcomers, the second settle themselves as more open, that way contrasting their national respective law on the subject (Zincone, 2006).

French teenagers' prejudice is defined by the author as "vital", the Italian one as "tribal". The author explains this double-faced prejudice through students' context of socialization: having been socialized to a strong idea of Nation, covered with a high sociopolitical and even emotional value, French adolescents would feel guilty for protecting it from any dissolving menace; on the other hand, Italian teenagers would be ready to accept immigrants into the national community, provided that they maintain a subaltern position within the society and particularly in the labour market, showing evidence of having been socialized, to a certain extent, to the implicit national pattern of *subaltern integration* (Ambrosini, 2004).

Chapter six extensively illustrates the outcomes of the multivariate analysis. The hypothesis of the predominant role of contextual factors is supported: although appreciable[5], effects correlated to individual traits –

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[5] In line with the literature on individual-level factors on intergroup attitudes, the survey confirms that negative attitudes slightly increase among teenagers attending vocational or

namely sex, socio-economic conditions and type of secondary school attended – are very limited compared to the value of the independent variable "country of residence". The analysis also provides contributions to two of the major debates within studies of prejudice since their beginnings: the contact hypothesis and the ambivalent role of religion.

Following the survey's outcomes, although teenagers declaring having friends who are "minority" members have a lower probability of feeling threatened by immigrants compared to adolescents who do not have such friendships, most of them show negative attitudes towards them. Thereby, the survey provides a further confirmation to the assumption that prejudice is resistant to contradicting personal experience and reports a clear distinction between the ego-tropic and the socio-tropic levels, being this last guilty to a greater extent for shaping individual intergroup attitudes.

As long as religion is concerned, authors reported opposite conclusions on its role in preventing (Gubert & Pollini, 2008) or reinforcing prejudice (Scheepers, Gijsbert, & Hello, 2002). Following the survey's outcomes, at an individual level religious integration participates in decreasing individual tendency to adopt prejudice-supporting attitudes: in actual facts, both Italian and French practicing teenagers - defined in the terms of churchgoers – show more positive attitudes towards immigrants than their non-practicing fellow nationals. When considered as a part of the national-level contextual factors, religion effects are once more appreciable on the kind of prejudice, rather than on its strength: in the Italian socio-cultural context, where national identity is less intertwined with secularism, and where Church – together with other catholic-oriented actors – have spread messages of acceptance towards immigration and diversity, issues related to cultural and religious pluralism are perceived by teenagers as less controversial and threatening.

In the final chapter of the book the author reports teachers' reactions to his survey. Since the whole study was carried out within schools, the author involved teachers both at the preparatory stage of the survey, and at the final stage, although analyzing their attitudes towards diversity was not a main goal of the survey. During the stage of presentation and discussion of the outcomes, Italian teachers generally agreed with the picture painted, while most of French teachers reacted with astonishment and raised strong objections.

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technical schools in comparison to humanities or science general high schools, among boys in comparison to girls and among teenagers declaring a right-wing political orientation.

Evidencing the existence of negative attitudes towards immigrants and minorities among teenagers, the survey's corroborated Italian teachers' own perceptions and feelings experienced during their work: as the author reports, at any time they tried to discuss the subject of diversity with their classrooms, they were faced to a negative reaction from "native" students. Besides, talking about their role in dealing with diversity, Italian teachers witnessed a feeling of uneasiness and tended to question their own skills as educators. These notes on teachers' attitudes, taken by the author on the fringes of his study, seem coherent with the literature on the subject (Giovannini, 1996; Fravega and Queirolo Palmas, 2003; Colombo E., 2010; Caneva, 2012; Santagati, 2012) mainly attesting three aspects: Italian teachers' awareness of their proper tasks in embedding newcomers in the receiving society; their personal involvement to this aim; their feelings of lacking a professional training to afford diversity management, and discomfort when thinking about the results of immigrants' inclusion in school and society. As a matter of fact, in Italian teachers' reactions as reported by the author, it is easy to recognize the two levels at which Italian teachers generally react to challenges of multiculturalism: the personal-practical level in which they see themselves as mediators, and the professional-theoretical level in which they search didactic strategies to adopt in mixed classrooms (Colombo, 2013). On the contrary, French teachers generally found difficult to accept the situation highlighted by the study and to perceive it as problematic. Actually, for many of them, this was the first time they were questioned on the subject of "diversity" and the picture painted by the survey openly contradicts the French dogma of an "indifferent to difference" (Bourdieu, 1966) school. Nevertheless, a minority of them recognized that, despite the principles affirmed by the republican school, prejudices and negative attitudes towards diversity were spreading among the students, but unlike their Italian colleagues, when thinking about solutions and strategies, they consider that school as a national system, and not teachers as single educators, should face the problem by providing uniform and standardized solutions.

Bergamaschi's survey results question French and Italian schools at two different levels: as environments in which majority and minority groups actually interact, and as educational institutions, guilty "not only for the affirmation that cultural plurality exists, but also for the experimentation of the cultural pluralism as a normative way to combine differences, including requirements to obtain a positive co-existence between them" (Colombo 2013, p. 18; Fabretti, 2011). Two main questions can be aroused: first, the

subject of intergroup relations at school, including peer interactions among students, and their effects on students' achievements; second, school's role in preventing and counteracting racism and xenophobia.

The first question especially challenges the interactionist branch of sociology of education, the one focusing on learning environment and analyzing students' achievements through the prism of school climate. A strong correlation between school climate and learning achievement have been largely demonstrated by American sociologists (Eccles et al., 1993; Goodenow and Grady, 1993; Finnan, Schnepel, & Anderson, 2003), in Italy an increasing attention has been dedicated to peer and cooperative learning strategies (Chiari, 2011) while in France learning environment starts being considered within studies on school drop-out (Broccolicchi, 2000; Bennacer, 2013). Despite the principles officially governing French and Italian National Education Systems – equality of treatment and blindness to cultural differences for the first, recognizing and valuing cultural differences for the second – evidence of an ongoing process of ethnicization, establishing a "socially constructed chromatic scale" (Seeberg, 2003) within schools has been provided both in Italy (Giovannini and Queirolo Palmas, 2010) and in France (Debardieux, 1998). Bergamaschi's survey results corroborate this statement and call for a further reflection on the quality of intergroup relations in mixed classrooms, especially in Italy where students' cultural differences and peer cooperation are emphasized as part of an intercultural learning model suggested within the Italian sociology of education (Santagati 2011, 2013a).

The second question aroused by Bergamaschi's work is on the connection between school as a value-centered agency of socialization and education (Besozzi, 2005), on the one hand, and social cohesion in a multiethnic society on the other hand (Santagati, 2013b). The survey results question both Italian and French school systems' effectiveness in preventing prejudice and in preparing the condition for positive and cohesive intergroup relations. Can school action actually counteract that of the other public actors (political parties, opinion groups and media), responsible for spreading negative and excluding images of diversity? This is a major challenge, that question Italian "uncertain public policy" (Colombo, 2013) of recognizing and valuing students' cultural differences at school, as well as the means implemented for this purpose so far. Concerning French school, intercultural proposals of valuing students' cultural diversity (Berque, 1985) have never been embedded and the

subject remained controversial (Morel, 2002; Lorcerie, 2005; Meunier, 2008). As a matter of fact, in both cases the gap between principles, practices and reality of the results is striking. Nevertheless, for the author, school is the appropriate actor for the task, and therefore, although conscious of the *tout scolaire* risks (Duru-Bellat, 2006), he writes in favor of a new civic education conceived for a more and more diversified young population in both countries.

Among the assets of Bergamashi's work, we can highlight: the focus on national contextual factors and their effects on prejudice formation; the interdisciplinarity and the firmness of its theoretical frame; the clarity and legibility of the research report, including the methodological section; the accuracy of the techniques applied. The survey's main and unavoidable limit is related to the choice of a quantitative method, constitutionally unable to enlighten the argumentation process behind teenagers' prejudice-supporting attitudes. As well, the role of family and school as major agencies of socialization in transmitting, translating, reinforcing or reducing national predominant images of immigration and cultural pluralism cannot be entirely appreciated through the multivariate analysis realized. For this purpose, a qualitative lens would certainly be profitable to complete the picture.

In the conclusion, Bergamaschi's *Jeunes français et italiens face à l'immigration. Les deux facettes d'un même préjugé*, although presenting assets and weaknesses, is in a position to provide a relevant contribution to the understanding of prejudice and intergroup attitudes, and to question sociology of education on some of its major issues and debates.

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