



# Validation of the subtle and blatant prejudice scale towards indigenous people in Argentina

Joaquín Ungaretti<sup>1</sup> · Edgardo Etchezahar<sup>2</sup> · Alicia Barreiro<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to analyze the psychometric properties of the subtle and blatant prejudice scale toward indigenous people in Argentina and its relationship with right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, tolerance for disagreement, ideological-political self-positioning, sex and age. A sample of 304 participants from Buenos Aires was selected using a non-probabilistic incidental method. Participants were aged from 18 to 41 years and they were asked to fill a self-report questionnaire including an Argentinean version of the subtle and blatant prejudice toward indigenous people scale together with right wing authoritarianism scale, social dominance orientation scale, tolerance for disagreement scale, ideological-political self-positioning scale. We found adequate psychometrics properties for the subtle and blatant prejudice scale, as well as significant and positive correlations with right wing authoritarianism, tolerance for disagreement, social dominance orientation and political self-placement. These findings may indicate that prejudice towards indigenous people in Argentina is a complex problem that cannot be explained only by considering intergroup relations, because different socio-psychological variables are related with its consolidation and maintenance.

**Keywords** Indigenous · Prejudice · Authoritarianism · Tolerance for disagreement · Social dominance

## Introduction

The psychological study of prejudice and discrimination begun around 1920 (Ungaretti et al. 2016). Before that period, negative attitudes among groups were considered natural and unavoidable responses to intergroup differences. In contrast, from a psychological perspective prejudice was defined as an

antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization -felt or expressed- directed towards a group or towards an individual for being part of that group (Allport 1954). Although this conceptualization implies that prejudice would necessarily involves a negative feeling, nowadays it is pointed out that the key of prejudice cannot be negative feelings, but the intent to support hierarchical and power based relations between groups (Dovidio et al. 2010).

According to this new approach, studies carried out in different countries showed that the traditional expression of prejudice -hostile and direct- has been replaced by a subtler and socially adapted kind of prejudice. Following these assumptions, Pettigrew and Meertens (1995), on the one hand, called *blatant prejudice* to the direct and hostile expressions of negative attitudes towards minority group's members. The authors suggest that blatant prejudice involves threat and repudiation feelings, as well as, the reject to establish an intimate contact with out-group's members. On the other hand, they call *subtle prejudice* to the more indirect and socially adapted expressions of negative attitudes. The presence of this kind of prejudice could be inferred from the defense of traditional in-group values, based on idea that out-groups are not respecting them; from the exaggeration of cultural differences to justify the

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✉ Joaquín Ungaretti  
jungaretti@psi.uba.ar

Edgardo Etchezahar  
edgardoetchezahar@psi.uba.ar

Alicia Barreiro  
abarreiro@flacso.org.ar

<sup>1</sup> Universidad de Buenos Aires, CONICET y Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora, Gral. Juan Lavalle 2353, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires C1052AAA, Argentina

<sup>2</sup> CIIPME-CONICET, Universidad de Buenos Aires y Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora, Tte. Gral. Juan Domingo Perón 2158, C1040AAH Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

<sup>3</sup> FLACSO-Argentina y CONICET, Tucumán 1966, C1050AAN Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

out-group's lower status; and from the denial of positive emotions toward its members.

Researchers have uncovered certain individual difference variables that tend to predict what types of people will be more prejudiced than others. Two of the main analyzed variables in the literature are right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) (Passini 2017; Passini and Morselli 2016). Right-wing authoritarianism is defined as the covariance of three attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism (Altemeyer 1981, 1998). The first cluster refers to the tendency to obey authorities established and legitimated in one's society; the second assesses a predisposition to hostility towards individuals and groups seen as potential threats to the social order; and the third concerns to the acceptance of social conventions (Altemeyer 1981, 1996). Thus, people with high levels of right-wing authoritarianism tend to express negative attitudes towards those who deviate from the values and ways of life of their own group (Altemeyer 1998) and are perceived as threats to traditional norms and values (Cohrs and Asbrock 2009; Duckitt and Sibley 2010).

Social Dominance Orientations is defined as an attitudinal orientation towards intergroup relations that refers to individual's preference of hierarchical relations over egalitarian ones; and the extent in which individuals "prefer to hold superiority and control over outgroups" (Pratto et al. 1994, p. 742). According to previous studies, individuals with higher levels of social dominance orientation will be more prejudiced but only to the groups perceived as inferior or as a competence for resources and power (Duckitt 2001; Duriez and Van Hiel 2002; Sibley and Duckitt 2008).

Besides right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation, Tolerance for Disagreement (Teven et al. 1998) is another psychological variable that correlates with prejudice (Etchezahar et al. 2015). According to Teven et al. (1998), this variable refers to the degree to which an individual can tolerate other people disagreeing with what the individual believes to be true. Consequently, people with low levels of tolerance for disagreement would have high levels of prejudice towards all those who are perceived as different in terms of values, beliefs and customs (Freitag and Rapp 2015).

Finally, different studies suggest that certain demographic variables also tend to correlate with prejudice as well, including age, gender and political orientation (Pedersen et al. 2000, 2005). For instance, studies have found that individuals who are older, male and are politically conservative hold more prejudiced attitudes than people who do not belong to these categories (e.g., Feather and McKee 2008; Morrison et al. 2008; Morrison and Morrison 2002; Pedersen et al. 2000, 2004; Pedersen and Walker 1997).

## Prejudice Against Indigenous People in Argentina

As in many others Latin-American countries, the social situation of indigenous people as a minority has a long history. One of the most relevant conflicts between indigenous people and the Argentinean and Government was the "Conquest of the desert", a military campaign that took place at the end of nineteenth century. As a consequence of this historical process, thousands of indigenous people were murdered by the military forces, the survivors arrested and forced to deny their culture, becoming invisible as a social group (Barreiro et al. 2017). This invisibilization become salient if it is considered that nearly one million of Argentinian inhabitants recognize themselves as indigenous, in a total population of 41 million. Also, according to the National Institute of Indigenous Issues (Instituto Nacional de Asuntos Indígenas 2015), most of the indigenous people still live in overcrowded conditions (53.8%) and this social groups present high levels of illiteracy (10%) and only 10% of them knows and uses their native language. This information brings up to the fact that even today, indigenous communities are still victims of poverty, social exclusion and prejudice (Sarasola 2010).

Subtle and blatant prejudice scales have been tested in diverse countries (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Ratazzi and Volpato 2000; Espelt et al. 2006; Navas et al. 2006; Frías-Navarro et al. 2009), including Spanish contexts (Rueda and Navas 1996; Cárdenas 2006, 2010; Cárdenas et al. 2007). However, just a few studies were found using subtle and blatant prejudice scale toward indigenous people in Latin America and they have not paid much attention to the reasons why members of major groups hold prejudiced attitudes towards indigenous.

For example, in Mexico (Laborín Álvarez et al. 2012), prejudice towards indigenous people was assessed in a sample of 780 college students. The authors adapted subtle and blatant prejudice scale (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995) to the target population, finding a factorial structure composed of three dimensions and 35 items: *opposition to contact*, composed of 12 items that explained 28.87% of the variance with an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .96$ ; *threat and rejection*, with 8 items that explained 10.36% of variance with an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .78$ ; *cultural differences*, composed of 11 items which explained 6.46% of the variance with an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .74$ . Another recent study in Chile (Ramírez Barría et al. 2016) adapted the subtle and blatant prejudice scale by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) to assess prejudice towards Mapuche native originals in the Magellan region. The scale was composed of 20 items with a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The authors reported only an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .78$  for the overall scale and found higher levels of subtle than blatant prejudice.

Hence, due to the lack of studies focused on indigenous people as targets of prejudice. Thus, the aims of the present study were to analyze the psychometric properties of the Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale Towards Indigenous, and to assess its relations with right-wing authoritarianism, tolerance for disagreement, social dominance orientation, ideological-political self-positioning and different demographic variables.

## Method

### Participants

Data was collected from a sample of 304 participants from Buenos Aires, both male and female (58,1% female y 41,9% male), with an age range between 18 y 41 years old ( $M = 22,42$ ;  $SD = 4$ ). Additionally, 1,4% ( $n = 4$ ) belongs to the upper class, 79,4% ( $n = 231$ ) to middle class and 19,2% ( $n = 56$ ) to the lower class.

### Measures

**Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Towards Indigenous Scale** An adapted version of the original Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995) was used. The scale has ten items grouped in two dimensions, five for subtle prejudice (e.g. “Indigenous living in our country teach their children values and customs different from those needed to be successful in this society”) and five for blatant prejudice (e.g. “There are a lot of indigenous who only cares about the past to get benefits in the present”) (see Table 1). A five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was used. Higher scores address higher levels of prejudice.

**Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA)** An abbreviated version of the original right-wing authoritarianism scale (Altemeyer 1996) was used, adapted and validated to the Argentine context (Etchezahar 2012) with a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Higher scores address higher levels of authoritarianism. The internal consistency ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and the construct validity ( $.98 < CFI < .99$ ;  $.04 < RMSEA < .07$ ) results, were adequate.

**Tolerance for Disagreement (TFD)** The present study was conducted using the TFD scale (Tolerance For Disagreement; Teven et al. 1998). The scale fifteen items and one-dimension structure, was designed to assess the degree to which individuals can tolerate opinions different from one’s beliefs (e.g., “I do not like being in situations where people disagree”, “I like to talk to people with different points of view than mine”, “Disagreement encourages conversation and improves communication”). The scale has a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Psychometric properties of the original scale were adequate in terms of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .85$ ) and construct validity tested through SEM ( $\chi^2 = 23.199$ ;  $p = .381$ ).

**Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)** A version of the original scale (Pratto et al. 1994), adapted and validated to the Argentine context with a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, was used (Etchezahar et al. 2014). The scale’s ten items are grouped in two dimensions: Group Dominance and Opposition to Equality, which together conform the social dominance orientation construct. Higher scores address higher social dominance orientation levels. The internal consistency ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and the construct validity ( $CFI = .94$ ;  $RMSEA = .07$ ) of the scale, was adequate.

**Table 1** Exploratory factor analysis for the subtle and blatant prejudice scale

	1	2	$r_{jx}$	$\alpha_{-x}$
<b>Subtle prejudice</b>				
1. Indigenous people are very different from other Argentines in the way they teach their children to follow the rules.	,837	,090	,69	,75
3. Indigenous people differ from the Argentineans in their beliefs and rituals.	,805	-,017	,62	,78
5. Indigenous people are very different from other Argentines in their hygiene habits.	,757	,338	,69	,76
7. Indigenous people are very different from other Argentines in the way they speak and communicate with others.	,673	,295	,56	,79
9. Indigenous people living in our country teach their children values and customs different from those needed to be successful in this society.	,628	,128	,48	,82
<b>Blatant prejudice</b>				
2. Indigenous people don’t try harder enough, so if the State return the lands claimed, they won’t use them properly.	,136	,826	,54	,72
4. If indigenous people will try harder, they could live as well as the others citizens in Argentina.	,194	,714	,67	,67
6. Indigenous people receive resources that should be distributed equally among the rest of the Argentineans.	,128	,708	,41	,77
8. There are a lot of indigenous people who only cares about the past to get benefits in the present.	,120	,704	,52	,73
10. Indigenous people are culturally inferior, which is why they don’t succeed like the Argentineans.	,089	,565	,58	,71

*BP* factor loadings for blatant prejudice items, *SP* factor loadings for subtle prejudice items, *M* mean, *SD* standard deviation,  $r_{jx}$  total item correlation,  $\alpha_{-x}$  Cronbach’s alfa if item deleted

**Ideological-Political Self-Positioning Scale (PI)** An adapted version of the one item Rodríguez et al. (1993) scale, was employed: “When talking about politics, people speak of the left and right: according to a scale from 1 to 5, being 1 extreme right and 5 extreme left, where would you place yourself?”

**Socio-Demographic Questionnaire** An ad-hoc questionnaire was developed to collect information about sex, age and self-perceived social class.

## Procedure

Participants of this study were invited to join in the study voluntarily and were informed that the results would be used only for academic and scientific purposes under the Argentinean National Law 25.326 protecting personal data. Methodological standards recommended by the International Test Commission (ITC) were followed in order to adapt Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Towards Indigenous Scale (Hambleton et al. 2005), including back translation process (English- Spanish- English) by two bilingual researchers. In a first phase, items were written and then refined until arriving at a preliminary version of the scale following the criteria of Ratazzi and Volpato (2000) to discriminate the dimensions of subtle and blatant prejudice. Subsequently, the items were submitted to the criteria of expert judges, to finally be administered to a pilot sample composed of 25 participants. In a second phase, based on the recommendations of the participants, several items were reformulated and others were discarded until arriving at the final version of the scale. These steps allowed the idiomatic adjustment of the instrument and were useful to identify those items that best represented the subtle and blatant prejudice dimensions.

## Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 20.0 (Lizasoain and Joaristi 2003) and EQS 6.1 (Bentler 1995). Firstly, according to Hair et al. (2006) within the framework of the Classic Test Theory, descriptive statistics for each item were calculated: mean ( $M$ ), standard deviation ( $SD$ ), asymmetry ( $S$ ) and kurtosis ( $K$ ). Secondly, the reliability of the scale was analyzed by testing its internal consistency using the Cronbach alpha statistic ( $\alpha$ ) and taking into account its variation if items deleted. At the same time, the construct validity of the scale was analyzed by both exploratory (AFE) and confirmatory factor analysis (AFC). Finally, the criterion validity was calculated by analyzing the correlation between scores on the Subtle and Blatant Prejudice towards Indigenous Scale with those obtained using the RWA, TFD, SDO and PI scales.

## Results

### Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Towards Indigenous People Scale

First, the ten items of the *Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Towards Indigenous people scale* were analyzed. Final item wordings, item-total correlation ( $r_{jx}$ ) and Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted ( $\alpha_{-x}$ ) are displayed in Table 1 for every item.

In general, every item contributed to the overall scale with a relatively high correlation ( $.41 < r_{jx} < .69$ ) and reliability did not improve if an item was removed (Hair et al. 2006). The internal consistency of the scale adaptation was examined by means of Cronbach's Alpha, which resulted in adequate values for both, subtle ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and blatant ( $\alpha = .77$ ) dimensions.

Subsequently, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using the 10 items of the *Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale*. The adequacy of the sample was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test ( $KMO = .832$ ) and Bartlett's sphericity test ( $p < .001$ ). Here, using the mean component analyses, an EFA was calculated with Varimax rotation. The obtained model consisted of two dimensions explaining 56% of the total variance (28,65% for SP and 27,35% for BP). Information regarding these values is displayed in Table 1.

Afterwards, a CFA was conducted using the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation with Satorra-Bentler's robust correction (S-B) (Satorra 2002) to compare the one and two correlated factor solution of subtle and blatant prejudice (Table 2).

Results indicated that the two factor model seems to adequately fit the data better than the one factor solution, suggesting acceptable internal validity following the criteria of Hair et al. (2006). According to the results obtained, the robust correction of Satorra-Bentler (S-B X<sup>2</sup>; Bentler 1995) was used to control the possible incidence of multivariate non-normality of the data. Based on the significance of the Chi-square statistic ( $p < .001$ ) in all cases, we can not ensure an adequate fit of the model. However, given that this statistic is susceptible to the size of the sample, other indicators were analyzed such as the ratio between S-B X<sup>2</sup> and its degrees of freedom, being

**Table 2** Fit indexes for the one and two correlated subtle and blatant prejudice dimensions

	$S-B X^2_{(gl)}$	$\Delta S-B X^2_{(gl)}$	NNFI	CFI	$\Delta_2$	RMSEA
One-factor	277,687 <sup>***</sup> <sub>(35)</sub>	7,93	.672	.745	.747	.148
Two-Factor	83,547 <sup>***</sup> <sub>(34)</sub>	2,45	.931	.948	.948	.068

Adequate fit:  $S-B X^2_{(gl)} \leq 5$ ; NNFI, CFI, IFI  $\geq .90$ ; RMSEA  $\leq .80$

\*\*\*.  $p < .001$



acceptable values between 1 and 3 (Ullman 2001). In addition, the Normed Fit Index, the comparative adjustment index and the Bollen’s Incremental Fit Index ( $\Delta 2$ ) were compared, with values  $>90$  as indicators of good fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). Finally, the Mean-Square Error of Approximation is reported, and scores  $< .06$  (Browne and Cudeck 1993) can be accepted as an indicator of adequate adjustment.

### Relations Between Prejudice Towards Indigenous People, Authoritarianism, Tolerance, Social Dominance and Political Ideology

As suggested by previous studies, relations between subtle and blatant prejudice and other constructs were examined. Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated for Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Towards Indigenous, RWA, SDO, TFD and PI (Table 3).

As expected, results indicate positive and significant correlation between blatant and subtle prejudice ( $r = .38; p < .01$ ). Furthermore, positive and significant association were found between blatant prejudice and RWA ( $r = .312; p < .01$ ), but stronger associations between subtle prejudice and RWA ( $r = .395; p < .01$ ). However, positive and significant association were found between SDO and both, blatant ( $r = .314; p < .01$ ) and subtle prejudice ( $r = .350; p < .01$ ). The relations between subtle and blatant prejudice with TFD were significant, but with low intensity ( $.222 < r < .252; p < .01$ ), while for PI stronger associations were with subtle ( $r = -.319; p < .01$ ) rather than with blatant prejudice ( $r = -.183; p < .01$ ).

Finally, differences by sex in the levels of prejudice toward indigenous were not statistically significant for blatant ( $t_{(300)} = 1.635; p = .104$ ) and subtle prejudice ( $t_{(300)} = -.096; p = .924$ ). Regarding to age, negative and weak, but significant associations were found between both subtle ( $r = -.17; p < .01$ ) and blatant prejudice ( $r = -.15; p < .01$ ).

**Table 3** Pearson’s correlations between Subtle and Blatant prejudice, RWA, TFD, and SDO

	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5
1. BP	.82	–				
2. SP	.77	.388**	–			
3. RWA	.78	.312**	.395**	–		
4. TFD	.71	-.222**	-.252**	-.298**	–	
5. SDO	.77	.314**	.350**	.395**	.268**	–
6. PI	–	-.183**	-.319**	-.322**	-.124*	-.388**

BP Blatant prejudice, SP Subtle prejudice, RWA Right wing authoritarianism, TFD Tolerance for disagreement, SDO Social dominance orientation, PI Political Ideology (1 is right-wing)

\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

### Discussion

One of the main contributions of this research was to provide a valid measure to assess prejudice toward indigenous communities in Argentina. The items for the Subtle and blatant prejudice towards indigenous people scale tested in this study seems to contribute to the overall scale and the ten-item structure replicates in part Pettigrew and Meertens original version (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). In addition, the reliability and validity analysis indicators were appropriate, they were similar to ones obtained in the original and subsequent validations of the scale (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995, 2001), as well as, to the ones found with versions adapted to other Spanish-speaking populations (Olaizola et al. 2014). According to validation process carried out in our study using CFA technic, the model with better psychometric properties is the one composed by 10 items in two correlated factors.

Another relevant contribution of this work was to test the associations between prejudice, right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, tolerance for disagreement. First, as it have been suggested by previous findings positive and significant associations were found between blatant and subtle prejudice, expressing that but may be considered related constructs, but conceptually distinct (McConahay 1986). Due to this association, it is possible to infer that individuals are likely to present both forms of prejudice but with different intensity. Moreover, in order to understand the strong and positive correlations between blatant prejudice and social dominance orientation, it is important to notice that the most representative SDO scale items highlights that inferior groups could become competitive. Hence, the correlation between both variables may be reflecting the intention of dominant groups to maintain social inequality against indigenous people, because there are actually claiming for their rights. Associations between subtle prejudice and RWA could be replicating one of the most striking features of the subtle prejudice items, that is, they highlight differences between indigenous and the other Argentinians in the norms, values and culture. These expressions may show that perceived cultural differences make indigenous a threat to the traditional norms and values of the dominant majority in our context.

In addition, according to the obtained results, both forms of prejudice are directly related to participants’ levels of tolerance for disagreement. This is coherent with Freitag and Rapp’s proposal (2015), people with lower levels of tolerance for disagreement would have higher levels of prejudice towards the groups perceived as different in terms of values, beliefs and customs. Likewise, as it was found by previous research (Feather and McKee 2008; Morrison et al. 2008) participants ideologically positioned in the right wing scored higher in both forms of prejudice, but even higher in subtle

prejudice compared to blatant. Contrary to Pedersen et al. (2005), in this study the differences by sex in prejudice levels towards indigenous people were not statistically significant. In other word, males and females may present similar attitudes toward indigenous people. Finally, in contrast to what was proposed by Pedersen et al. (2004), according to the obtained results there were significant and negative relationships between age and both forms of prejudice. Perhaps this founding could be explained by considering the increase of claims and political organization of indigenous people since 1994 when they achieve the constitutional recognition of their rights over the land where they have traditionally inhabited. The greater visibility of these social group could lead to the development of more negative stereotypes about them.

Regarding the methodological limitations, it should be noticed that incidental non-probability sampling used here does not allow the extrapolation of the results to the entire population. Therefore, it is necessary to work with representative samples of participants from different social classes and with direct contact with indigenous people, given that relations between the proposed variables can be highly susceptible to personal, sociodemographic and social characteristics. On the other hand, cross-sectional and non-experimental designs such as those carried out in this study do not allow to discriminate the true effects of the variables considered on prejudice, as well as their temporal stability, limiting the development of significant inferences from this study.

For future research it is important to examine the role of social desirability considering some implicit measures of prejudice towards indigenous people. It would be also recommended to assess if differences by educational level and other related psychological variables, explained differences in subtle and blatant prejudice levels towards indigenous people. Given that prejudiced attitudes towards diverse groups are strongly related to the rejection of political demands for greater inclusion and equality between groups, these kind of studies could contribute with stronger evidence to the development of public policies that promote equality and celebrate diversity in our societies.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** Joaquín Ungaretti declares that he has no conflict of interest. Edgardo Etchezahar declares that he has no conflict of interest. Alicia Barreiro declares that she has no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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